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# THE KING'S COIN

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# THE KING'S COIN.

# THE KING'S COIN;

OR,

## *GOD'S FRACTION.*

BY THE

REV. THOMAS J. BASS,
CURATE OF ST. STEPHEN'S, LIVERPOOL.

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION*

BY THE

*VERY REVEREND THE DEAN OF CANTERBURY.*

LONDON:
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# Dedicated

TO

HIS GRACE THE RIGHT HON. AND MOST REVEREND

EDWARD WHITE BENSON, D.D., P.C.,

*Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England and Metropolitan,*

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS HIGH MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENTS,

AND AS A SMALL TRIBUTE THERETO,

BY

*THE AUTHOR.*

# AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

In the preparation of this work the author has endeavoured to "prove all things," and he earnestly asks the reader to "hold fast that which is good."

The plain statement of a duty is the first step towards its accomplishment. In these pages the author has attempted to make as plain as possible a duty incumbent on each member of the Christian Church, and one which, in his opinion, has not received the attention it deserves.

The furtherance of the Gospel of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" is the one end at which he aims, and if this work produce that effect, his end will be attained. Praying that the "Father of Lights" may so shine through this volume, and lighten those who read, and touch their hearts to respond, the author gives it to the world with the full hope that the bread cast upon the waters shall be found after many days.

The author desires to express his sincere thanks

to the VERY REVEREND R. PAYNE SMITH, D.D., DEAN OF CANTERBURY, for his commendatory and instructive Introduction: he likewise acknowledges his indebtedness to his esteemed friends, Dr. F. A. MACPHERSON, and Mr. J. DAVIES, B.C.L., LL.B., for their criticisms and suggestions.

LIVERPOOL, *January* 1886.

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# INTRODUCTION

BY

*THE VERY REV. ROBERT PAYNE SMITH, D.D.,*

DEAN OF CANTERBURY.

THE writer of this volume is one who is earnestly endeavouring to bring before the mind of the Church a truth now almost forgotten, namely, that we ought to give unto God a fixed proportion of our income. In these days, when the right of the Church to retain its endowments is challenged, we hear much about the origin of tithes, and that they are God's part of the fruits of the ground which year by year He gives us. But how many of those who thus plead for the maintenance of tithes prove the sincerity of their pleading by giving the tithe of their own income to religious and charitable uses? And who are the great enemies of tithes but those who, while affirming that it was right for Saxon thanes and Norman barons to saddle their lands for all time with the payment of a tenth for religious uses, systematically neglect the duty equally incumbent upon themselves of giving the same share of the fruit

of their labours to the same purposes? If the Church of England is disendowed it will be a Nemesis upon it for living upon the piety of the past, and neglecting the practice of this piety in the present.

For even in the present day, when our dear Church is awakening to a sense of her great responsibilities as the Established Church of the nation, and there are signs of growing liberality all around, two great deficiencies are very plainly discernible: the first, that the giving is on the part of the few, and not of the many; the second, that even with the few there is little method in their munificence. Now, in the Bible there is systematic teaching as to the share of our income due to God, and it resolves itself into two or three heads, which are as follow:—

1. In addition to voluntary offerings the Jews paid tithes—one tithe for the support of the Levites, and a second tithe, which from Deut. xii. 6, 7 and other places we learn was held in trust by the priest for the good of the people, as well as for the service of the sanctuary. When tithes are treated merely as so much rent their religious character is lost.

2. Nothing might be enjoyed by the owner until God had had His share. The firstlings of all cattle, the first-fruit borne by a tree, the first sheaves of the harvest, all belonged to God. In this there was a twofold lesson. For first, it taught a truth, inculcated even more plainly by Christ, that God is owner, and man a steward set over that which is another's; and secondly, that we can expect no blessing or enjoy-

ment of what we receive unless God has had His portion. If we rob Him we act as thieves, and not as His children.

3. We find in the New Testament, 1 Cor. xvi. 2, the law of Christian liberality. At regularly recurring intervals, the Christian is to set apart a portion of his income for God. St. Paul recommends the Lord's day in each week, and this would be suitable for those who live by labour; as most of those to whom the Apostle was writing probably did. For those in trade the time would be when they took stock, and knew what their profits were. For those with fixed incomes the calculation would be easy, and they would keep God's account as carefully as that of their own share. But St. Paul does not mention any fixed proportion. It is no longer a tithe, but Christians are to give "as God prospers them." But we may feel sure that the old law of tithes was accepted by the Christian Church. The first converts had gone far beyond it, and we find it practised down to mediæval times. And never can a Christian give less than a Jew, and surely should give more. But this "more" cannot be calculated arithmetically. To many in poverty a twentieth would be a larger gift than a fifth from one whom God prospers greatly. But God's share will be no loss to the very poorest. For, like the first-fruits, it will bring a blessing upon all the rest.

There are signs that some men are winning back this lost truth, of giving in proportion as God prospers us. But they are the few and not the many. What

the Church needs is that her children should awaken to a sense of this great privilege; for a privilege it is rather than a duty. And then her stakes will be strengthened and her cords lengthened, till with rapid increase she wins the world for her Master. For "bring ye the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah Sabaoth, if I will not open you the windows of heaven. . . . And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah Sabaoth" (Mal. iii 10–12).

A Church supported by the piety of the past is allowing her strength to depart from her. It is a proof that our national Church is still a living Church that she has done, and is doing, so much to overtake the neglect and supineness of the last century. But the liberality, growing often into munificence, on the part of a large number of her children, has not always been recognised by them as a duty, though they have felt it to be a privilege. And still to the large majority of professing Christians it is neither one nor the other, and they wonder that they eat their bread joylessly, and in narrowness of heart, not recognising the fact, that no first-fruits have been given to God, and that no blessing from Him cometh upon that of which He has not had His share. The days are past when Christians in their first burst of thankfulness gave up all their private property to the Church, and had all things in common; but to give no share to God of that which is wholly His, and we but stewards, is to cease to be Christians at all, or

to be at most but nominal members of Christ's body. For read the eighth chapter of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and there you will see that the grounds of Christian liberality rest upon our acceptance of Christ. If we know the grace of the Lord Jesus, we know that though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor; and if we would follow His example, we must first give ourselves unto God, just as Christ gave, not silver and gold, but Himself for us. And if we have given ourselves, then the rest will follow. For though Christian men and women may fall far behind in the acknowledgment and discharge of a duty, especially when it has been lost from sight, or has held but a backward place in the preaching of their pastors, and a low place in the practice of all around, yet are their hearts always open to the calls of duty; and it is hoped that the teaching of this volume will make many feel that systematic giving is a duty which no Christian can conscientiously neglect.

R. PAYNE SMITH.

THE DEANERY, CANTERBURY,
*January* 1886.

# CHAPTER I.

"Truth the more you spread,
The more you emulate truth's Deity
In His best attribute."

—BAILEY.

# THE KING'S COIN.

## CHAPTER I.

### *GOD'S FRACTION.*

"Truth the more you spread,
The more you emulate truth's Deity
In His best attribute."—BAILEY.

IT is of the highest importance that we should know the truth. It is the only firm basis upon which to build general or individual weal. An appreciation of its value is now to be seen in the unsparing efforts moralists and philanthropists are making to spread its various forms. Pulpit and University, School and Press are to-day bound together in the holy task of publishing truth. As inhabitants of a free land, desiring the highest good of the greatest number, we are firm believers in giving truth to the masses.

But a professedly Christian people should be thoroughly conversant with what is termed Revealed Truth, its privileges, duties, and rewards: for to the Christian has it been specially intrusted, by it he has been specially blessed, and he is laid under pro-

found obligations to give it to others; indeed if he is faithful to his profession he will do this, for "true Christians resemble flowers, which, when touched by the first ray of the genial morning sun, stretch upwards, expand their refreshed petals to the monarch of the day, and diffuse nothing around them but fragrance and refreshment."

There are some truths which have been set forth almost to the exclusion of others. Such pressure has been laid upon the former that the latter have been made to appear rather insignificant.

The people have been told with laudable and enthusiastic fervour of God's truth as to repentance, faith, holiness, and other duties and privileges; but they have not, generally speaking, been so earnestly instructed in the Scriptural truths which reveal His claims upon their income—the consecration of the purse as well as of the heart, of the hand equally with the knee. There has, moreover, been no special avidity manifested to learn this phase of Christian truth: this, perhaps, in a measure accounts for so few books appearing upon it, and also for the grave dereliction of duty referred to. Social position, the offerings of others, momentary emotion, have, alas! too frequently been appealed to, and oftentimes when the desired response has been so produced, there has been profuse adulation of the giver—rather than a clear declaration of the duties and privileges incumbent upon him, and the rewards promised on their fulfilment. This has militated against Christianity, crippled her resources and deprived her of aggressive

ability. It has caused some to unduly magnify their importance, others to undervalue their position, and has fostered unmindfulness or ignorance of the just and evident claims of a loving God upon income.

Now all persons, paupers excepted, are in receipt of an income; out of which they furnish the necessaries of life, and those who have the disposition and ability, its comforts and luxuries. Some people have asserted their inability to give owing to an absence of income, their idea of income being limited to the surplus remaining after actual expenditure. If this idea of income be correct, none of us need have any unless we choose. Even from a worldly point of view, how undesirable thus to live ignoring the exigencies of life, much more the claims of the Donor of all.

For whence is the primary source of every man's income? God. Ostensibly it comes from hard labour, from artistic skill, from commerce, from professional practice, or from profitably invested capital; but, in reality, these are only *channels* of income, while the great and bounteous source is Jehovah Himself. To every believer in Providence this is obvious, nor does the revealed will of God, the Scriptures, fail to say so: "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee the power to get wealth."* "He did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."† And He is declared to be "the Living God, who giveth us richly *all* things to enjoy."‡ Because God is the source we are commanded to pray, "Give us

* Deut. viii. 18. † Acts xiv. 17. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 17.

this day our daily bread," and the inspired Apostle St. Paul, writing to the poor believers at Philippi, furnishes them with this encouragement: "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." * It is a common thing for men to alienate absolutely their property, but the Divine Being never does so, though placing it in our hands, and making it contributory to the supply of our wants.

He still maintains His *claim* on it. He has from time to time manifested that claim by reserving a certain portion for Himself.

The Garden of Eden was blissful and beautiful. Everything in it was for man's use, save one special portion which God reserved for Himself. All man's *time* was not his own absolutely, for a seventh portion of it was claimed by the Divine Being; and, be it noticed, the first brethren acknowledged by their offerings this Divine claim to a portion of their substance, though the exact nature of those offerings differed very widely.

Looking into later times we find a definite portion of income *required* as a matter of right from a people who, being specially chosen by God, we should reasonably expect would execute His will: we refer to the Jewish nation and their offering of not less than a tenth to the Most High by His command.

Now all this demonstrates that man was not even in the *earliest* times absolute lord of creation, to do his own sweet will; and that the Divine Being

* Phil. iv. 19.

has ever regarded property as His; that man owed fealty to Him; and that man's relation to property of every kind was merely as manager or steward; so we find that He expressly calls it His, thus:—

"The silver is *mine*, and the gold is *mine*, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." * "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." † "Every beast of the forest is *mine*, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." ‡ The Patriarch Job fully recognised this truth. Jehovah had bestowed upon him gold, silver, cattle, and such like; in His providence He was pleased to allow them to be taken away. But does Job repine? Does he complain of injustice? No. In regard to all he had received, he never looked upon God as having abandoned His proprietary claim. He considered everything not only as coming from the Lord, *but* as still *belonging* to the Lord. When therefore he was deprived of all, he had no sense of slight or injustice, but said: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." §

King David, in the moments of presenting his most munificent offerings to God, with the lowliest reverence and with the deepest self-abasement, said: "But who am I and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of Thee and of *Thine own have we given Thee.*"

The true relation, then, which every man sustains

* Haggai ii. 8.
† Ps. xxiv. 1.
‡ Ps. l. 10.
§ Job i. 21.

to income is not that of proprietor, but agent or steward. What he gets he receives in trust. He is the manager of his Lord's goods. This is made quite plain to us in the New Testament parable of the Talents, on which we need not dwell.*

With these truths before us we ought to try and correct the spirit which would see no farther than the limit of self, and would blot God out of the commercial, professional, or so called independent world. His claim is upon everything, whether the gain, or the instrument for acquiring it, and it cannot be shaken off by the cold hand of indifference or destroyed by misguided ignorance, even though human nature would tend that way, as the following illustrates:—

A young man, having in a single day made considerable profit by his trading, was appealed to for a trifle towards a charitable object whose need was very pressing. He refused. "But," it was urged, "God has some claim upon what you have been fortunate enough to make. Is not some of it His?" "It's all my own and I can do what I like with it," was the uncouth reply. ALL his own! Was it? The common philanthropy of the age says, not; the common instinct of true manliness says, not; and the Revealed Will of the Almighty says, not. Yet, alas! this is the deplorable spirit of too many living in a professedly Christian land. We must look not merely at the product of intellect, but to Him who gave that intellect; not merely to physical

* Matt. xxv. 27.

strength, but to the Great Renewer; not merely to enterprise, but to Him who has endowed us with the spirit of it, and consider that everything is His, His inalienable right.

Standing in the relation then that we do to God, we should apportion His property as He directs, seeing that the right to such direction by the Almighty cannot be doubted. He has ever exercised the right of disposition at His discretion. He took from primeval man a certain part of the earth known as Eden, and gave him another portion instead. He gave life and sustenance to Noah whilst He sent His judgments on a sinful world. He gave to Abraham flocks and tents and a numerous posterity, to Job both prosperity and adversity. He gave to Egypt corn or withheld it. He set up kings or deposed them. He gave to kingdoms resources and prestige, or poverty and weakness.

His teaching on the subject is not difficult to ascertain. Nature is His book, from which He has designed us to learn many lessons; there He is teaching us in unnumbered ways that we should not keep for self and merely selfish purposes all that we acquire. Giving is inculcated in no meagre way. Yes, so largely and so plainly that we can hardly conceive of any man denying this truth. The ether is redundant with gifts varied and beneficent. The earth, with its teeming life, its verdure and beauty, is ever giving; its beetling mountains give massive grandeur to the landscape; its trees alluring fruits which gratify the taste, and leafy branches

which afford soothing shade; its verdure and flowers give exhilarating perfume, healing for the sick, and sustenance for man and beast. Mighty rivers like the St. Lawrence have been flowing for thousands of years, slaking the thirst of generations, watering the fields, and still they are giving. "I have," says Dr. Guthrie, "watched the rise of the sun, as he has shot above the crest of the mountains, or in a sky draped with golden curtains sprang up from his ocean bed. I have wondered to think that he has melted the snows of so many winters, and renewed the verdure of so many springs, and painted the flowers of so many summers, and ripened the harvests of so many autumns," and yet at these seasons in their courses He is ever giving, and this is true of every department of nature. God has specially taught us by Christ, the Christian's Exemplar and Lord, to give. He is God's best gift to helpless man. His earthly ministry was a series of sublime gifts; He gave joy for suffering, health for sickness, comfort for pain; to the deformed comeliness, to the deaf hearing, to the blind vision, to the pale corpse the ruddy glow of health, to the sinner forgiveness, to the ignorant supreme knowledge, and, above all, Himself a ransom for all.

> "His was a life of miracles and might,
> And charity and love."—SMART.

Truly then God, by Christ and nature, aptly teaches us that what He has committed to our trust must not be completely absorbed by self. He who ceases

giving puts himself out of harmony with nature and with nature's God, and would no longer even exist if similarly the Almighty withheld from him His gifts. Not only are we thus taught by example what is the will of God on this subject but we have His express *commands.* "Every man shall give as he is able." * "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of thy increase." † "Freely ye have received, freely give." ‡ "Give and it shall be given to you." § We are told a peculiar blessing is attached to the fulfilment of this duty, namely—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." ||

Now, observe, that not only are we commanded to give, but certain *objects* are set before us which the Lord has made it incumbent on us to support.

The poor never ceased out of the land of the Hebrews, and God commanded them to be provided for.¶ Christ says, "Ye have the poor always with you," ** and God's solemn warning is, "Whoso stoppeth his ears to the cry of the poor he also shall cry himself and not be heard." †† Christ has called and set apart men to carry on the work of His ministry, and has given instructions for their support.‡‡ Injunctions are laid upon us as to "distribution" and "hospitality." §§ There has also been committed to our trust the support and propagation of a Gospel, whose magic power has hushed to rest

* Deut. xvi. 7. † Prov. iii. 9, 10. ‡ Matt. x. 8.
§ Luke vi. 38. || Acts xx. 35.
¶ Deut. xv. 11. ** Mark xi. 7. †† Prov. xxi. v. 13.
‡‡ 1 Cor. ix. §§ Rom. xii. 13.

the tempest raised by conscious guilt, given serenity to broken hearts, gladness to those who wept, contrition and tenderness to the obdurate and rebellious, unrivalled charms to poetry and art, impetus to manufacture and commerce, brotherhood to nations: and by it man has been and is being reconciled to God, and conformed to His image.

Now if God be the Great Proprietor and Disposer of all substance, and we as stewards receive a portion which we denominate income; and if He commands and sets before us special objects for us to support, then giving to those objects is giving to Him, and the portion, whatever it may be, which is so needed for these special objects, is God's special claim on income: it is plainly *His portion* or *fraction* in a very particular sense.

Nor does God look upon it otherwise, for He by His prophet strongly upbraids those who withhold that portion. He declares them to be guilty of the most disreputable of all acts—"Robbing *Him*." "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed *me*. But ye say, wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings."*

If we keep, then, all our income, eat it, drink it, wear it, save it, we rob the poor, rob the sanctuary, rob the ministers of religion, rob the heathen, and thereby *rob God*.

Covetousness, then, or lust must not clutch this God-given, God-claimed fraction, for it is His. What that fraction is we will next consider.

* Mal. iii. 8.

# CHAPTER II.

"The sacred page
With calm attention scan. If on thy soul,
As thou dost read, a ray of purer light
Break in, oh, check it not! give it full scope:
Admitted, it will break the clouds which long
Have dimmed thy sight, and lead thee till at last
Convictions like the sun's meridian beams
Illuminate thy mind."

—HAYES.

## CHAPTER II.

### *WHAT FRACTION?*

"The sacred page
With calm attention scan. If on thy soul,
As thou dost read, a ray of purer light
Break in, oh, check it not! give it full scope:
Admitted, it will break the clouds which long
Have dimmed thy sight, and lead thee till at last
Convictions like the sun's meridian beams
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"I ALWAYS believe a portion of my income belongs to God. I give *that* portion at the church service, half in the morning and half in the evening. I dare not do anything else," said an active little man professing high Christian attainments, when spoken to on this subject. By the merest accident it became known, that on each occasion he dropped a threepenny piece into the offertory, and as he held a government office, his income was known to be over two hundred pounds per year. Did this man give God his portion? Did he give proportionately? We think not, and our conclusion is formed largely by the help of Scripture teaching.

Yet there may possibly be some who cannot so readily agree with our conclusion, and we know there is a number of professing Christians, whose

minds are exercised on this subject, who ever and anon ask themselves: What portion of my income is to be dedicated to the service of God, to how much of it does the Divine Being assert His special claim? To endeavour to satisfy the minds of these persons and to do so in as certain a manner as possible, we reply that, taking a consensus of evidence from Divine Revelation, God's special claim rests on at least one-tenth of income. A man may give more and in many cases we believe is bound to give more, if he is to act proportionately; but we cannot honestly and safely give less than one-tenth. Now we will endeavour to make this fact clear, as simply yet as fully as possible.

In proof of this we find our first argument in the fact, that we have no precedent in Scripture which will warrant us in giving *less* than a tenth. In the Scriptures we often read of the offerings of the great and good to the cause of God; and in *no single instance* do we read of any one who gave less than a tenth, many gave more, much more, but none gave less. If we establish this statement on clear grounds, from evidence adduced from various parts of Scripture written under different dispensations, we shall also have established the proposition we have just laid down, viz., "that God's special claim rests on at least a tenth of income," for the Scriptures, as we have received them, are the rule of faith and practice,* and what the entire teaching of Scripture is reasonably clear upon, we, as professing

* Isa. viii. 20; John v. 39; Acts xvii. 11; Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

Christians, are bound to receive and embody in our life and action. It need hardly be necessary to preface our examination with the statement that the Scriptures teach us in more ways than *one*, not only by direct *command*, but also by *example*, that there are God-given lessons for *us* in God's treatment of men, communities, and nations. This seems specially evident in the writings of the First and Second Books of the Kings, and the First and Second Books of the Chronicles, for they set forth pre-eminently the history of men and communities in relation to *God*, and His dealings with them, and the object of this is, that men and nations in after ages may learn profitable lessons from their example; else, political and other national matters, which men do account of the highest moment, would have had the preponderance in these books, but they have not. In the New Testament Sodom and Gomorrha are said to be "set forth for an *example*." * Christ taught much by His blessed example, and those who deny teaching by example must also deny a very essential portion of their own life.

Human nature is so difficult to instruct, particularly in things relating to God, that it is good to teach it by more ways than one, and if any given lesson is taught in the Word of God by more than one method its authority to *us* is strengthened.

With these facts before us we will endeavour to examine the chief cases of offering recorded in the New Testament, and go back through other dispen-

* Jude 7.

sations, so far as we reasonably can. We take those of the New Testament first, because many are disposed to think that its teaching is more authoritative to us in this dispensation. If this is so, and we can prove our point, it will strengthen our case all the more.

In Second Corinthians * we read of the offerings of the Macedonian Churches. And how they did give! They gave liberally; they gave up to the full measure of their ability; yea, *beyond* their ability. Of this an inspired apostle is himself a witness, and, from personal observation, bears close testimony to the fact: "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God, bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia; how that in great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints."

Now some will say—true, the Macedonians gave liberally; but it is not *recorded* that they gave a tenth. We reply it is not recorded that they did not give a tenth; and, therefore, the silence of the apostle, as to the exact proportion of their giving, proves nothing either one way or the other.

It is, however, *morally* certain they did give a tenth and more, as otherwise the apostle could not have commended them as he does, and have held

* viii. 2, 3, 4.

them up as *examples* to other Churches. Only let it be remembered, that St. Paul had been brought up a strict Jew, that as such he had been accustomed to devote not only one-tenth of his income to God, but *more than* two-tenths; and that, therefore, the giving of but one-tenth would have necessarily appeared to him but a small measure of liberality.

Let it be further borne in mind that this strictly educated Jew deemed Judaism but the shadow, and Christianity the substance; that the old national religion had fulfilled its task, and ought now to be suffered to drop away; that to cling to the shadow when it had been superseded by the substance, was reversing the order of God; that as the substance is superior to the fitful shadow, so Christianity excelled in obligation and privilege Judaism. And with these views filling the mind, let it be asked, could any man with such training, and with such ideas and habits, have commended and held up as examples of Christian liberality, any people who had consecrated to the service of the Most High *less* than one-tenth of all they had received? Reason and candour emphatically answer, No; and therefore, we conclude, it is *morally certain* that the Churches of Macedonia contributed one-tenth, yea, more than one-tenth, of their temporal substance to the purposes of God.

But this conclusion appears to be placed beyond all controversy by the consideration that, if the Macedonians had given less than a tenth of income to God, the inspired apostle would not have called

that "*rich* liberality," 2 Cor. viii. 2,* which, under a previous and inferior dispensation, of fewer privileges and smaller obligations, could not have been liberality at all.

The liberality of the first Church at Jerusalem was almost limitless; its members "had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as *every* man had *need*," Acts ii. 44, 45. Now we do not say that such an *extreme* liberality was prudent, or that God required it, or that its full example is obligatory upon us. Our object in referring to it at present is to prove that these first believers gave a *tenth and more*.

Probably you have heard it often said that "Zacchaeus gave half of his income to religion." This is a mistake. He gave half to the *poor alone*. Here is his language to Jesus: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor,"† and surely, the man who gave a full half of all he got to the poor, did not forget, nor neglect, nor refuse to give largely to the support of religion also. The probability therefore is, that this "Son of Abraham," instead of merely giving the half mentioned—which, by the way, would appear prodigious and unreasonable to

* Marginal reading "singleness." On this Conybeare and Howson in Life and Epistle of St. Paul, say, p. 456: "The word here, probably denoting *singleness*, means, when applied to the mind, a disposition free from *arrières pensées*, either of duplicity, selfishness, or grudging; thus it might naturally acquire the meaning of liberality, which it has in the eight and ninth chapters in this epistle, and perhaps in Romans xii. 9."

† Luke xix 8.

many rich and highly sanctimonious Christians of our day—gave three-fourths, or, it may be, even more of his temporal substance to the service of God.

The poor widow, whose giving attracted the attention of Jesus, gave ten-tenths; for she cast all her living into the treasury of the Lord.

Such are the cases of giving most prominently recorded in the New Testament. In none of them can we reasonably say that less than one-tenth was offered; and this is of no mean import, particularly to those who regard the New Testament writings of special authority in this dispensation.

We will now take another retrospective view, and examine the offerings of those who lived under a prior dispensation, namely, the Jewish; it has many things to teach us as to religion and morals, it has also something to teach on this great subject of "God's portion." Indeed the Jews are God's own people, and were specially chosen to inculcate lessons, which, if we would consult our highest welfare, we must not overlook.

We have slightly anticipated the Jewish offerings; for, in alluding to the early life of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, his training, ideas and habits, we have intimated that a pious Jew consecrated more than *two-tenths* of all his income to the maintenance of religion and the relief of the poor. This, as a mere assertion, of course, is worth little. It behoves us, therefore, to give it our consideration, and support it by satisfactory proof.

In obedience to command and exhortation, the Jews

presented to God their offerings. What these were which they presented by command we learn, thus:

In the Book of Numbers * we find it written, "But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit; therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance."

Here is the *first* tenth. The Levites were to devote themselves wholly to the service of religion; they were God's ministers, hence they were to have no temporal inheritance. They were to have neither possessions, employments, nor cares which would tend to secularise their minds, and draw them off from the high and holy duties they were called to perform.

Now are the ministers of the sanctuary to want? Or, are they to depend for subsistence upon a precarious, impulsive, and, too often, alas! a cold and niggard charity? While abandoning their share in the possessions of the world for the sake of serving the spiritual interests of the people, is that same people to allow them to be grieved, and vexed, and chafed, and oppressed by poverty? To this reason says, No; justice says, No; humanity says, No; the interests of religion say, No; and God, the good, the merciful, the just, declares it shall not be. Hence while the spiritual functions of the Levites are carefully prescribed, their temporal wants are *amply* provided for. They are to have for themselves and

* xviii. 24.

their households bread enough and to spare. Every Levite had a *living.* It is formally and solemnly ordained that they shall have, as a matter of right, a full tenth of all the temporal blessings which Israel obtained. As to the extension of this principle to our times we will have something to say further on.

But there was another tenth, which may be termed the *second.* The Jewish Dispensation was one of feasts and sacrifices. These were on a large scale. They were costly. They must be provided for. Hence the payment of another tithe is ordained. Here is the ordinance—"Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year, and thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always." *

This is plainly a different tithe from the former. That was to be paid to the Levites. This was to be expended in celebrating the feasts at the temple. The one was consumed by the ministers of religion and their families; the other was to be consumed partly by the offerers themselves, partly by the Levites, and partly by the poor. Nor is it uninteresting to notice that a spiritual *benefit* followed upon the payment of this tenth, for its perpetual recurrence kept God before them as the source of all their incomings, so it is written "that thou mayest learn to

* Deut. xiv. 22–24.

fear the Lord thy God *always*." If we imitate the Jews in their tithes offerings, we shall also like them have the *same* spiritual benefit.

But this is not all. These two tithes were not the only portion of an Israelite's income dedicated to Jehovah. He had to give more. What! more yet! Yes, indeed! for he had in addition to furnish trespass offerings. He had to leave for the service of the poor and needy the gleanings of his fields and of his vineyards. Once the harvester passed over a spot, he did not return to gather the gleanings but left them for the necessitous. A beautiful instance of this is recorded in the Book of Ruth,† on which we need not dwell here.

Again, besides all this, there were offerings which may be said to have been given upon exhortation; by these offerings the Jew as a special privilege was permitted to exercise his liberality. These were termed free-will offerings; of them we read, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart, ye shall take my offering." * Speaking broadly these offerings were made on extraordinary occasions. The three principal were the construction of the Tabernacle, the building of the Temple, and its restoration after Babylonish bondage. To free-will offerings we will again refer.

Now with these facts before us, the conclusion already advanced is inevitable, we cannot resist it. Reason and candour compel us to admit that every

* Exod. xxv. 22. † ii. 2.

pious member of the Ancient Congregation of God habitually dedicated to Jehovah's service not merely one-tenth, but much more than two-tenths, of all temporal good which he had received at His hand.

Strange views are often held on the relation of money to religion; for, as a set-off against the force of so striking an example of pecuniary consecration to God, we have heard some persons inconsiderately say that "the Jews might well afford to give in this way. They were not like us in these days of taxation. Their offerings to religion and the poor were the *only* public burdens they were under obligation to bear." Surely a moment's reflection is sufficient to show the absurdity of this statement.

The Jews had a civil government to maintain, the taxation to support which was oppressive in the extreme in the days of Solomon, and even in those of David heavy enough. The request of the people to Rehoboam, Solomon's son, upon his accession, is remarkable: "Thy father made our yoke grievous, now therefore make the grievous service of thy father and his *heavy* yoke which be upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee;" * and the threat to increase these financial burdens was the ground taken for revolt. In the days of Nehemiah the people were compelled to sell their property to pay tribute to the King of Persia. We have not got so far as that. In later times did they not pay tribute to Cæsar? † Had they no public buildings, highways, and other essentials of civilised life? and if so, did they not

* 1 Kings xii. 4. † Luke xxiii. 2; Rom. xiii. 6.

pay for them? But we deem it unnecessary to meet this objection further. The intelligence of most readers will readily overcome it, and those who are interested in the question may find a pleasure in searching out information for themselves. But it is of the highest importance to trace this subject as far back as possible, and in so doing we are led to inquire: Were those passages of Scripture which we have quoted the *first* intimation to the Jews of God's claim to a tenth of income? We think not. There is evidence to show that God required a tenth from an earlier period.

From Sinai, "amid thunder and lightnings and a thick cloud," the Ten Commandments were given. But in what sense were they given? Not as new laws which had never before been known to men, but as the codification of old laws which had influenced men from the beginning. The moral obligations inculcated by the Ten Commandments we find acknowledged by the lives of good men long before they were codified for the Jews. We have express teaching as to the obligatoriness of Sabbath observance, and the sanctity of human life. Sinai gave men a form of law, but the moral obligations of that law were felt long before Sinaic utterance. Now the offering to God of a tenth was a *moral obligation* to the Jew. In it we can find nothing ceremonial or typical, as there was in the manner of offering certain sacrifices or in the wearing of certain garments. It was God's method whereby the moral duties of piety, benevolence, and justice were inculcated, and in

the performance of which by the Jew, God was honoured; and, being a *moral* obligation, is it not reasonable to suppose that, like the other moral obligations, it existed before the Jewish Dispensation, and was acknowledged by good men in the earliest times? We think such a conclusion is fair and reasonable.

There is a strong analogy between the moral obligation placed upon the Jews to observe the Sabbath and the duty of offering a tenth. It is evident the moral obligation of Sabbath observance existed prior to Jewish times. This we learn from its divine institution at creation,* and in addition to this from the language of Moses addressed to the Jews: † "This is that which the Lord *hath said,* Tomorrow *is* the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord." When did the Lord say it? the scriptural answer is, When He ceased creating; since when there is not a vestige of evidence to show that He spoke one word about it until this announcement by Moses. It is increasingly plain that it was an accepted ordinance from the familiar style of Moses' speech "the holy Sabbath;" it is too familiar and incidental to lead us to think anything to the contrary.

Of the institution of the Sabbath, then, prior to the days of the Jews, there can be no doubt. Its embodiment in the moral code of Sinai did not *primarily* constitute the day to be in a special sense the Lord's. It was so constituted and claimed ages before.

There is language used by Moses concerning this

* Gen. ii. 2. † Exod. xvi. 22, 23.

day to which we desire to draw special attention. "To-morrow *is* the rest of the holy Sabbath." It *is* the Sabbath. "The seventh day which *is* the Sabbath." This language is couched in present time, "*is*," which, on the face of it, naturally leads us to understand that the Sabbath was, then, in an accepted sense, and not for the first time, the property of the Lord. This is confirmed by the other evidence on the subject which we have just mentioned.

But this self-same language we find used by the *inspired* writer in reference to offering God a tenth as His peculiar portion of income: "All the fruit of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, *is* the Lord's: it *is* holy unto the Lord." *

Now as the use of this "present time" "*is*" shows us that the Sabbath was then, and not for the first time, the peculiar property of the Lord, and as this is substantiated by other evidence, so we contend the use of the same language in reference to offering God a tenth, as His peculiar fraction of income, brings us to the same conclusion with regard to it, namely, that God claimed a tenth in days prior to Jewish tithe law. Nor let it be objected that, in the 32d verse of the same chapter, the future time is used concerning the tenth, "it shall be holy to the Lord," † and that therefore we must understand its authority in a future sense only, for the future time is used in the Mosaic promulgation of the Ten Commandments,

* Lev. xxvii. 30.

† The future tense used here necessarily refers to future offerings, and by analogy must apply to past offerings.

and we have proved they were obligatory on men prior to their Sinaic codification, and why may the payment of a tenth of income to God not have been also? Why, indeed!

Seeing that we find unmistakable evidence of the payment of at least a tenth of income to God as His *due,* in a dispensation prior to that of the Jews, our position is established, and we also make clear another very important fact that God's claim to a tenth of man's income* did not rest upon the authority of the Jewish economy, and, therefore, that when it passed away the duty of paying a tenth did not necessarily cease.

* Lev. xxvii. 30.

# CHAPTER III.

"A critic on the Sacred Book should be
Candid and learned, dispassionate and free;
Free from the wayward bias bigots feel,
From fancy's influence and intemp'rate zeal:—"

—COWPER.

# CHAPTER III.

## *WHAT FRACTION?*

> "A critic on the Sacred Book should be
> Candid and learned, dispassionate and free;
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> From fancy's influence and intemp'rate zeal:—"
>
> —COWPER.

COME with us now to the days of the pastoral kings, the Patriarchs. They recognised the duty of giving. That Jehovah had *claims* not only upon their souls, their bodies, and their time, but also upon their temporal substance, they never seem to have for a moment doubted. It was a fact as clear to them as the silvery lustre of the night, on which their shepherds gazed in wonderment, amid the solemn silence of the sleeping world.

What a giver was Job! His offerings smoked on the altar of God continually; and his givings to the poor were cheerful, manifold, and rich: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the

blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not, I *searched out*." * Nor were these ancient servants of God unsystematic and random givers. They gave by rule and rendered God a *tenth* by Divine command.

The case of Abraham, as recorded in Genesis,† is striking and instructive. We are told he gave Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, "tithes of all." Some, indeed, are bold enough to contend that the goods, of which, in this case, Abraham gave a tenth, were not his own. If so, we reply, he had no right to give them away. It was unjust to do so. But who will be audacious enough to affirm that the "Father of the faithful and the friend of God" acted unjustly, or dared to present stolen property to the Most High? The truth is, the goods, though once belonging to Lot and others, became the property of Abraham. He had at the risk of his life, and by the most chivalrous valour, recovered them from the rapacious grasp of Chedorlaomer and his confederate kings; and consequently they became his. They became so by right of conquest. They were the spoils of war. They were a *bonâ fide* addition to Abraham's property. Yet whilst he will not keep for himself from "a thread to a shoe-lachet," he knows that others have rights, and whilst he entirely disavows his own, he will render to them their due. Hence he claims only what his servants had already consumed in the necessities of war, and part of the spoil which fell to his three auxiliaries, Aner, Eshcol,

* Job xxix. 11-13. † xiv. 20.

and Mamre,* and he gives Melchizedek *one-tenth.* Why? Not because the latter needed it, for in him we have the person of a king, doubtless as independent as Abraham, but it was because Melchizedek was God's Priest. From this it appears that, at this time, God claimed for Himself one-tenth, which His priest received as a matter of right. Abraham says, nothing for myself, but justice to those who have claims, among whom Jehovah is included, showing that He had a claim.

Nor let any suppose that we have said too much in asserting that this amount was paid by Divine command, for the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrew people, who were the descendants of Abraham, and who were intimately interested in everything pertaining to their great progenitor, and likely to know much concerning him, shows that it was by command.† In the seventh chapter of this epistle, the *superiority* of Melchizedek's priesthood to that of Levi is asserted, and in connection therewith distinct and special reference to God's tenth: "And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a *commandment* to take tithes of the people, according to the law. . . . But he (that is, Melchizedek) whose descent is not counted from Levi, received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises." Now if Melchizedek did not receive from Abraham a tenth by Divine *commandment*, and, therefore, by Divine right, he had not the same claim to the tenth as the

* Gen. xiv. 13, 14, 24. † Heb. vii. 5.

Levites, and in this respect his priesthood was inferior to that of Levi. But there can be no inferiority, for the Apostle asserts Melchizedek's *superiority*, in that he not only received the tithe by Divine sanction, but even received it from Levi in the person of his progenitor. There is no doubt then that Abraham paid by Divine command a tenth, and Melchizedek received it as a Divine right, being the priest of God. Truly glad are we for this light from the New Dispensation,* for it shatters the miserable attempts of those who are ever trying to show that God claimed a tenth under the Jewish economy, merely.

Consider the memorable vow of Jacob, a later patriarch: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."†

This is the vow of young life stepping on the threshold of the world. From whence did he learn to fix upon the sum of a *tenth* of income for God? Does he not recognise it on the same ground as Abraham, and offer it as God's commanded portion? We have every reason to suppose so, for he makes the offering of a tenth the vow of *life;* no particular season is mentioned; and a tenth of *all* is his

* Heb. vii. 5-9.

† Literally, "And all that thou shalt give me, I will assuredly *tithe* it unto thee." Gen. xxviii. 20.

language. This view is strengthened when we consider that in those days, when oral traditions and family customs were carefully preserved, he must have known of his grandfather's offering to God, as to its amount, and on what authority he presented it,—"Divine command." It is not likely that such an important act of worship, received from such an important source, would have been without due weight to a grandson who acknowledged God's hand in the affairs of life.

True, the tenth is not said to have been paid to a priest of God. Jacob stands in an intermediate position between Aaron on the one hand, and Melchizedek on the other: as the head of his own family he is its priest, but this strengthens our case, for it shows that irrespective of a separate order of priesthood, God in that early time claimed a tenth as His own. It was to be given for His glory; its payment was not dependent on a priesthood, but was a moral obligation to God, a portion by which He was honoured by its being offered.

We have now looked at the offerings of the good, under the Christian, the Jewish, and the Patriarchal Dispensations. We believe we have examined them with candour. We are not conscious of having exaggerated them through prejudice, or twisted and distorted them for the purpose of supporting a theory. We have endeavoured to exhibit them as God has revealed them, and to elicit from them the great lesson they are intended to teach. Nor do we believe that lesson doubtful. We are persuaded

it is distinctly this—While we have many precedents in Scripture which will warrant us in giving more than a tenth of income to God, there is *not one* which will warrant us in giving less.

If, therefore, the example of the good and upright, in all ages, and under all dispensations, is of any authority; if it is to give us any light, to afford us any instruction; and if the Holy Spirit expressly commands us to be "followers (imitators) * of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises;" † we cannot consistently or safely give less than a tenth of all we receive to the service of that God in whose hand our life is.

But we will now hasten to pursue another line of argument on this subject, so that its obligation upon professedly Christian men may be increasingly clear.

It is necessary that we should not only give to God, but it is palpable that we should give *in proportion*. A nation such as we are, spending one hundred and thirty-six millions every year on alcohol, and but *one* million and fifty thousand on Christian missions, cannot be said to be giving in a truly proportionate sense, particularly when we consider the inestimable blessings we have received from Christianity.

In the New Testament *proportionate giving* is expressly taught. To us it is as evident as sunlight, that while the New Testament expressly commands us to give, it just as expressly commands us to give in proportion. Its teaching is utterly opposed to

* Revised Version, imitators; Greek, *μιμηταί*. † Heb. vi. 12.

merely impulsive and haphazard dedication of income to God.

What was the great lesson which Jesus intended to teach His disciples when He called their attention to the offering of a certain poor widow? Undoubtedly it was the duty of proportionate giving. "Of a truth, I say unto you, this poor widow hath cast in more than they all." Certainly, the two mites were not more, intrinsically, than the offerings of the rich. How then more? It must be proportionately, "for all these had cast in of their abundance" to the treasury of God, but she of her penury.

The same lesson is inculcated by the inspired Apostle St. Paul, who directed that the Corinthians should "lay by in store as God had prospered them." * And again, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath and not according to that he hath not." † Now, proportion necessarily involves a *rule*. Where is the rule of proportionate giving to God? To say that every man is at liberty to make a rule for himself, is equivalent to saying that there is no rule at all. A man might then give one farthing in every hundred pounds of income, but could that be called, in a reasonable Christian sense, proportionate giving to God, as He had prospered him? There must be a rule. Where is it? If it is a Divine rule to regulate human life, it must be in the Bible. We look into the Old Testament and we have records of two dispensations, the Patriarchal and the Jewish.

* 1 Cor. xvi. 2. † 2 Cor. viii. 12.

"Ah!" exclaims somebody, "say nothing about the Jewish Dispensation; it was peculiar." Indeed, were its *principles* peculiar? Was worship peculiar? Was mediation? Was propitiation by sacrifice? And if not, why, in the name of common sense and candour, affect to believe that its grand principle of proportionate giving to God was peculiar, and why turn away from the *rule* by which the minimum amount to be given under both was ascertained? Surely there was no peculiarity in the principle, and the rule is at least suggestive.

But let us, for just a moment, and that for the sake of argument, give up the Divinely ordained rule under the Jewish Dispensation, then it follows that the rule we are in search of must be found under the Patriarchal; and nobody, we presume, will say that this dispensation was peculiar, that it was ordained for a peculiar people and for peculiar ends. Well, then, here is its rule of proportionate giving to God—a tenth of all. Abraham gave a tenth, and Jacob a tenth.

But acute and obstinate covetousness will contend to the last: as it holds its gain with tighter grasp, we hear it object—"Yes, Abraham and Jacob gave a tenth, but it is not recorded that God commanded them to do so." Suppose it is not recorded, will you therefore infer that it was not commanded? If so, be honest in your reasoning, and plumply deny that the Patriarchs were commanded to offer sacrifice; but sacrifice they did offer, and it was accepted, yet without having been commanded it would neither

have been offered nor accepted. In like manner they offered to God His tenth as His claim upon their income, and it was accepted. Melchizedek gave Abraham his priestly blessing; Jacob was abundantly blessed. We have already shown by the full light of New Testament inspiration, in St. Paul's reference to Abraham and Melchizedek, that the former paid, and the latter received, not less than a tenth by Divine command and right.* We thus find the Divinely *commanded* rule of proportionate offering to God under the Patriarchal Dispensation.

Yes, and we are induced to believe that such a Divinely commanded rule existed even under the Adamic Dispensation. From Pagan writers we learn that "*several* nations very far *distant* from each other, and as it seems, without the *least* acquaintance or commerce one with another, observed this custom . . . It is reasonable to believe that, like that of sacrifice, there was some Divine direction for it, and that it was derived from Adam to Noah till at the dispersal at Babel it spread over all the world."† If such a practice had not Divine command, it is, to say the least of it, strange that distant nations, differing in language, customs, institutions, and laws, should observe it. Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground‡ to the Lord. Might this not have been the *first*

* Page 36.
† Collyer.
† Aristotle speaks of a tenth as "an *ancient* law at Babylon."
‡ Gen. iv. 3.

fruits, Cain's tenth, and not an offering (sacrifice) like Abel's, for his sin?

If the rule of offering not less than a tenth was in force, by Divine command, during the Patriarchal and Jewish Dispensations, has that command (and consequently that rule) ever been repealed? If it has not, then it must be in force still. We affirm that from no period of the world's history can there be a shred of reliable evidence produced in proof of the contrary.

What, not a particle! When the Jewish Dispensation was abolished, was it not also? No, for this Divine rule was in force, as we have seen, prior to the Jewish Dispensation, which merely strengthened an existing law, and the abolition of the one does not necessarily involve the abolition of the other, for the one was not dependent on the other. This same kind of argument St. Paul uses as to the promise in his Galatians' Epistle: * "The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."

But it may be urged that the Jewish law is abolished, "old things have passed away." Here is a common error; the ceremonial and civil duties were abolished, but the moral duties are binding; Christianity has not blotted out any of them.

Christ in His sermon on the Mount expanded and enforced the moral law, and again He condensed it

* iii. 17.

in what He termed a new commandment,* and you cannot break a single moral obligation without breaking this new commandment. Look at it in another way. What moral obligation is abolished? Is the duty to be honest, not to shed blood, not to covet, &c., less binding now than among the Jews? Is the moral obligation to keep one day in seven wherein to worship God less binding? No. Neither is the moral duty of *honouring* God, made obligatory by Divine command, less binding, nor to that end the means (offering at least a tenth of income). And, if it is persistently urged that giving a tenth is not honouring God, we meet it by saying that withholding that tenth is declared by the *last* Jewish prophet to be *dishonouring* God, an act of the basest sort, namely, "*robbery*." † If God made the offering to Him of at least a tenth of income a moral obligation in the days of the Jews, then it is a moral obligation now, for it has not been repealed; nor does the New Testament declare it annulled, but on the contrary sets before us examples wherein the Divine rule was *upheld* and not less than a tenth offered. It does more, it plainly teaches the living force of the moral law on us. Saint Paul, in the ninth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, shows this distinctly. He says, "*Saith not the law also*." ‡ Is it for a moment to be thought credible that he would have used this language if the moral law was not as obligatory on the Christian Church as it was upon God's chosen people? It evidently was authoritative to

* John xiii. 34. † Mal. iii. 8. ‡ 1 Cor. ix. 8; xiv. 34.

the early Christians. They had lessons to learn from it and to obey, and what was needful for them to be instructed in and to obey is equally so for Christians in all ages.

Though the Lord Jesus Christ had "ascended up on high and led captivity captive," His apostles still remained to give expression to His blessed will. To this end they were inspired by the Spirit of Christ, and under the influence of inspiration no doubtful arguments could be adduced. Hear, then, the language of the Apostle for our guidance: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? *Even so* hath the LORD ordained that they which preach the Gospel should *live*" (not exist, merely, but have the full benefit of life) "*live* of the Gospel."* In accordance with this law the priests were "partakers," the people offerers, of a tenth: and, as it is the duty of Christians to maintain their ministers, this ordinance still remains binding on them.

It is said that if, on the brightest summer's day, you will descend the shaft of a coal-mine and look upward through the mist and shadow that intervene, you will see the stars plainly. So place yourself first on the basis Christ and His apostles did, the Old Testament; then through its mist and shadow look into the New, and you will see the moral obligation to give God's fraction of a tenth clearly—you will see St. Paul's appeal to the moral law as a bond and rule of

* 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.

Christian duty, and you will behold men and women coming up to its requirements, and honouring it by the abundance of their offerings. We know the stars are not destroyed but hid on our brightest days. In reality they all exist as truly as when they visibly spangle the canopy of night. So the blaze of Gospel day does not destroy a single moral obligation. Abraham discharged his moral obligation in the payment of his tenth; the Jews did also; and we should do likewise.

Admit the complete harmony and unity of the Word of God, how one part of it is absolutely necessary to be known in order to understand another. Admit that it resembles an extensive and highly cultivated flower garden, where there is a vast variety of fruits and flowers, some of which are more essential or splendid than others, but that there is not a *blade* in it which has not its use and beauty in the system, and these facts will be palpable. Accept the inspired teaching, that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our instruction or learning*." * "That we must render to God the things that are God's." † Then argue as we may, cavil as we will, we cannot with an open Bible before us resist the conclusion that a tenth of income, at least, belongs to God as his peculiar fraction. This is the rule of proportionate giving.

Let us then be consistent. If we are Bible-living Christians, let us also be Bible-giving Christians. If we will close our purses let us also close our Bibles.

* Rom. xv. 4. † Matt. xxii. 21.

But no; let us rather open both. If we do this the Church will bless us, the poor will bless us, the heathen will bless us, and God according to His promise will pour upon us so large a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.*

* Mal. iii. 8–12.

# CHAPTER IV.

"If faith produced no works, I see
That faith is not a living tree;
Thus faith and works together grow,
No separate life they e'er can know."

—H. MOORE.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *ITS VARIABLENESS.*

"If faith produced no works, I see
That faith is not a living tree;
Thus faith and works together grow,
No separate life they e'er can know."

—H. MOORE.

YOU have doubtless heard it remarked that a tenth is much too little for a prosperous man to give in proportion to the same amount offered by a poor man; also, that when the financial atmosphere is clear and bright, trade prospering, and a person's income advancing with "giant strides," a tenth is not a just measure of offering as compared with the same amount given in stagnant times, when income is less favourable. So we have heard Christian men speak on this subject, and their remarks are perfectly true.

The Christian's fraction due to God admits of variation from a tenth up to any higher amount that an enlightened conscience may suggest. Our remarks heretofore have referred to not *less* than a tenth. Our duty and privilege do not always stop here. This we will endeavour to make plain from various considerations. Any candid mind that will examine the instances recorded in the New Testa-

ment for our instruction, whether from the review we have given in a former chapter, or from independent inquiry, will be convinced that more than a tenth was on *each* occasion offered. This will appear plain to us if we consider the gifts of the Macedonians, or of Zacchaeus, or the offering of the poor widow, or of the first Christian Church at Jerusalem, and this latter instance is very important to us, for it is the *first* instance in the Christian economy.

All these known cases are of no small moment to us, as they are doubtless singled out from many other such instances of offering, for we cannot suppose that all are recorded,* but these are set before us to demonstrate to us our duty. From all this we must conclude that the offering of a mere tenth to God is not the full limit of Gospel privilege and obligation, for if it were so we would reasonably expect to find instances, or a definite statement to that effect.

It not infrequently happens that living in the daily enjoyment of certain advantages we forget their value, and take them as a matter of ordinary course, but chiefly are we unmindful of the many privileges possessed by us over the Jews.

To them Jehovah was the God of Sinai. An infinite mystery lay in His very name, which was spoken either not at all, or with bated breath. *We* have the inestimable privilege of regarding Him with feelings of unmeasured tenderness and love as "Our Father which art in heaven." The Jews had more limited ideas of the Deity than we who, in the person of Our

* *Vide* John xxi. 25.

Blessed Lord, have the embodiment of the Godhead in human form, treading the intricate mazes of earthly life, giving us practical demonstration as to how we should live holy lives, and therefore more easily apprehended by our limited capacities. How much better can weak humanity live by a model than without! How thankful we should be! The sacrifice of the Jew was but imperfect, a mere shadow from which he looked by faith to the substance. We behold the sacrifice completed in Christ's person on Calvary, and *know* that "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sin." * It is to *us*, under the Christian Dispensation, that the Holy Spirit has been imparted to quicken our life and lead us into the way of all truth.

The Jew had but one temple to which all should resort. To the Christian is given the ineffable blessing of having his body made God's dwelling-place. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth *in* you" †

Clouds of mist hung around the grave of the Jew as he mourned for his departed. For us every vestige of that mist has been cleared away. The king of terrors has been deprived of his power by Christ through His resurrection and ascension. He hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. The Jewish idea of heaven was limited indeed. Christ hath revealed to us enough of its glory to call forth our energies and hopes to attain thereto. Did Moses or Abraham live here now, how

* Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14. † 1 Cor. iii. 16.

they would value our blessings. Would not their raptured hearts find expression, it may be to our astonishment, in the words of our Blessed Lord: "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see these things which we see, and have not seen them; and to hear these things which we hear, and have not heard them." "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear?" *

If Christianity has thus increased our privileges, has it lessened our responsibilities? If a tenth was the least that Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses could give with their limited privileges, can we give God anything less? If we have any regard to our increased knowledge, higher spiritual position and attainments, we cannot circumscribe our offerings at the legal tenth.

Visiting any of our British ports on Sunday you will find the flags, representing different nations, flying from the masthead of their respective vessels. We close our ports to none, save in self-defence from the deadly miasm of disease or the desolation of war. Our intercourse is with mankind. This cannot be said of the Jew; some were beyond the pale of interchange. The labourer of Judea did not extend hospitality to his neighbour of Samaria. There was a contractedness about the Jew. His religion was pre-eminently narrow. The revelation of Jehovah in a special sense was to him and for him alone. He was not called upon to spread his religion amongst surrounding nations.

* Matt. xiii. 16, 17.

He was not instructed to manifest aggressive life. Proselytes he might receive but did not seek.

Our Christianity is the very reverse of this. Its spirit is eminently aggressive. We are commanded to pray for the conversion of *all* men, yea, to do more, to strive for it, nor to cease our efforts while one soul remains unchristianised. This is the duty of Christianity. Our religion is not what many false Christians represent it to be—a narrow, selfish individualism. We have something else to do besides saving our own souls. Our Gospel is for nations as well as individuals; it lays us under obligation to elevate the laws, customs, and habits of mankind, to bring benediction to their bodies, to ameliorate their circumstances, sanctify their souls, and make them meet for heaven.

And if two-tenths were required from the Jew to fulfil the purposes of his religion, how much more is required from us to accomplish the world-wide obligations that have been laid upon us by our Lord? Evidently from these facts, for the wealthy to give but one-tenth of their abundance is not to meet the measure of their responsibility, or the free spirit of a free Gospel which says, "freely ye have received, freely give." *

Do the needs of the present day demand this? says one. Truly they do.

In days gone by the Gospel had not an open door in many heathen nations: we offered up earnestly the prayer of the Master—"Thy Kingdom come, Thy

* Matt. x. 8.

will be done." That prayer is being answered, the heathen are now asking for the Gospel, and missionary societies are not able to meet the requests, being crippled in their power of extension from *lack of funds.* If we will offer that prayer now, we must offer another for a spirit of greater liberality to stimulate Christians to come up to and beyond the tenth. With all our zeal and instruments we are told some fourteen islands in the New Hebrides group are still without missionaries, which means 70,000 people living as cannibals, and likely to remain so, until the liberality of a Christian nation puts it in the power of missionaries to christianise them.* It has been calculated that "only a little more than two per cent. of the labouring classes in our large cities are brought under the influence of the Gospel." There are thousands of these people who never hear the voice of a religious teacher, and never read a religious book or paper. It has been our sad experience to meet children who have never heard of the *Name* of Christ. Though the spiritual condition of some of the lowest classes is appalling, Home Missionary Societies have been obliged to withdraw some of their agents, not from lack of spirit, but of funds.

Fifteen years ago the need of the Church was for men to recruit the ranks of the clergy, now her

* The number of Heathens and Mohammedans in the world amounts to 926,000,000. One society alone wants now one hundred additional missionaries. Arabia is completely without Christian missionaries.

need is, in a special sense, monetary. I quote the words of the Bishop of Lichfield in one of his recent addresses to his clergy: "Their difficulty was not so much to find men to recruit the ranks of the clergy as to find *means* for their support. Some *systematic* effort would have to be made in the shape of husbanding the resources of the Church if her growing requirements were to be met." Take as a sample a district known to the author. In it there are some ten thousand people of the poorest class, and until lately there was only one clergyman; now there is another, but what are two for so many souls? There is no Church Mission Hall or suitable building into which to gather the people. The church, to use an expression of their own, is "too fine for them in their poor clothes." These people will never be able unassisted to meet the financial needs of a clergyman, and there are many more such districts in *Christian* England. What would the offering to the Lord of ten thousand pounds be by some of the wealthy children of the Church as an endowment for carrying on His work in such an area? To them nothing more than the buying of a casual picture or work of art; to the present and future generations a means whereby spiritual bread might be conveyed to hungry souls.

At the command of God the Jew paid a tenth to God's priest, the Levite, under the New Dispensation the ordinance of the Head of the Church is that they which preach the Gospel shall *live* of the Gospel. What was binding on the Jew we have shown is bind-

ing on the Christian. And yet we read on authority that "no profession is worse paid than the clerical . . . no class of men receive so small a pecuniary return for the large sums expended in preparation for their calling." One of our bishops speaking of his clergy the other day, said "their benefices were not 'livings' but *starvings*." * It is painful in the extreme to read of some of the Clerical Charities, "that owing to the number of applicants they cannot possibly consider any more cases for relief." † Nor is this state of things confined to the Church. Many ministers of Nonconformist bodies, particularly those who deny that there is by Divine institution a separate order of men for the ministry, are in as sorry a plight.

Charles Spurgeon, whose word cannot be said to be without authority, wrote in his "Sword and Trowel" of the Baptist ministry thus: "The earnings of artisans of but ordinary skill are far above the stipends of those (ministers) among us who are considered to be comfortably maintained. . . . We are asked repeatedly to send students to spheres where £40 is mentioned as if it were competence, if not more, and those who so write are not always farm

* "If a clergyman had continually to study pounds, shillings, and pence, he could not very well study theology with any profit to himself or his people. It crushed a man's very heart and soul."—*Bishop of Liverpool at Annual Meeting, Diocesan Church Aid Society, January* 23, 1886.

† On this subject see the very admirable work on "Clerical Charities." Rev. E. C. O'Donoghue, B.A., Hampstead Parish Church, Hampstead, N.

labourers, but frequently tradesmen, who must know what penury £40 implies. A church contributing £70 frequently counts itself munificent. Ministers are indebted to gifts from friends in other denominations, for parcels of left-off clothing, which are made up for their *otherwise ragged children.*" *

"Madam," said Archbishop Whitgift to Queen Elizabeth, "religion is the foundation and cement of human society, and when those that serve God's altar shall be exposed to poverty, religion shall be exposed to scorn and become contemptible," and so it is. The Church is no more absolved by Christ from caring for its clergy, than the Jews were from supporting the Levites, and if the withholding of a tenth from the latter was stigmatised by the Almighty as robbery, what is the keeping back of God's portion from his ministers? By whatever names we may represent it, it is detestable and gross injustice. At the very least an honourable and respectable competency should be given without grudging on the one side, or flattery, or pressure on the other, but this is by no means the case in, alas! too many instances.

In view of pressing need at home and abroad, what is the Church's duty? It is in the spirit of faith to fulfil the commands of God and meet in His strength the obligations placed upon her. If the poor and middle class men are endeavouring, with self-sacrifice, out of the willingness of their hearts, to give God his tenth, what is required from those

* "Sword and Trowel," vol. iii. pp. 17-29.

whose offerings cost little or no sacrifice to them, and whose thousands lie behind those offerings? A tenth? Yes, much more. "Unto whomsoever much is given of him shall much be required." *

An increased fidelity in the discharge of financial duty towards God is at present absolutely necessary to remove the gross inconsistency which exists between Christian profession and practice.

The Christian professes to love his Christianity; it is his highest pleasure; yet how small is the manifestation of that love compared with that made by men of the world for their acknowledged pleasure. No sacrifice is thought by them too great for their special enjoyment. So we see the immense sums which are expended yearly on science, art, literature, the stage, and other objects. Immense indeed in proportion to that given to religion. The orderly, beautiful, and frequently magnificent buildings in which these pleasures are gratified, are a standing mockery to Christians whose churches are dirty, dismal, neglected, and uncomfortable. If the Christian loved his Church as he professes to do, he would not permit her sanctuaries to present the condition many of them at this moment do. He is satisfied to have music in the church which he would strongly reprobate at the "Philharmonic" or "Choral Union." He is content to let the church and its accessories be cold and damp and depressing to body and soul; but in the art galleries, museums, concert rooms, which he frequents, there

* Luke xii. 48.

must be warmth and light and comfort, in fact, everything to exhilarate. Albeit, he professes to love the Church infinitely more than any of the latter.

Worldly-wise men who have little religion see the thousands of pounds belonging to the professed Christian, and the financial weakness and crippled energies of the Church, and cannot reconcile the two. They see the highly respectable Christian paying his half sovereign, or five pound note for his "entertainment," and yet in church offering his paltry sixpence. They follow him home and hear him say that "He enjoyed that sermon, it did him so *much* good," and they are puzzled more than ever. The truth is the professed love of a host of Christians and the financial manifestation of it are out of joint.

This state of things is a source of stumbling to mere worldly men in their acceptance of Christianity. They say: "If the Gospel be of such value as Christians claim for it, then why do they act so meagrely towards it in money matters?" If this reproach and rock of offence is to be taken away, if a full proof of Christian love is to be given to the world, it is positively necessary that we materially increase our offerings to God.

If the "man of the world" spends far beyond a tenth on his darling pleasure, can the Christian spend so much less on his beloved Christianity?

One instance and only one is there on record in the history of God's people when they gave too *much.*

That was at the erection of the Tabernacle in the wilderness at an estimated cost of £250,000. The people voluntarily contributed of their substance until they were restrained.

Why this boundless enthusiasm? Because the people had in lively remembrance the cutting lash of the taskmaster, their unbearable labours, the sting of Egyptian bondage; and so, in the joy of freedom, they exceeded the Divine requirements of giving. Let us recall the afflictions out of which we have been raised, the dark clouds which have lowered yet not broken over us, the weaknesses which have been removed, the opportunities of advancement afforded, the answers given to prayers; and then can we say: "This legal tenth I will offer to God and no more?" Will not rather a sense of gratitude move us to the dedication of a higher fraction!

In deciding the amount we must estimate what should be retained. This is reasonable. We do not expect a midget to put forth the power of a Hercules, nor an infant to run as a man. Why was it that Christ said of the widow, she gave more than all those who had given? Because He had regard to what was left after offering. He said: They did cast in of their *abundance*, she even *all* her living.* Measure then your offerings, not by their intrinsic value, or the number of figures taken to denominate them, but by their proportion to what you have retained. This is Christ's method of proportionate giving, and if some will apply it to them-

* Mark xii. 44.

selves they will find one-tenth is *too little* to offer to an omniscient Lord.

Amidst the storm-lashed foaming ocean, there is one point, which if the seaman's eye can catch, by it he may guide his course in comparative safety; that is the pole star. So there is one point upon which, if we fix the eye of faith, we shall not miss our way in deciding what fraction for God; this is the point to which a groaning and travailing world looked forward in the time of Moses and Elias, and upon which we look back with throbbing hearts of gratitude, "the low bare eminence called Calvary." There is Christ our great incentive to Christian giving: "He died for all, that they which live should *not* henceforth live unto themselves, but to Him who died and rose again." * But living in expensive luxury, ease, elegance, fashion, the indulgence of every taste which can please the palate and gratify the eye, whilst we offer a trifle to God, is living to ourselves.

"Ye are *not* your *own*, ye are bought with a price," † is the inspired language of St. Paul to Christians. If we are not our own, can we reserve hundreds or thousands of our Lord's money for self, offering Him but a tenth? and can we in the light of Calvary call it proportionate giving?

"If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." ‡ Deny! follow! how far? To the limits of a tenth. Yes, and if *need* be to poverty, ignominy, and death. This is the further limit to the Christian life.

* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. † 1 Cor. vi. 20. ‡ Matt. xvi. 24.

The examples left for our guidance in the New Testament, our increased privileges beyond those of all prior dispensations, our extended duties beyond those of the Jews, the dire needs of the Church, our special blessings, our resources, and the teaching and example of Christ, lay us under obligation out of our abundance to offer to God a tenth and more. But what say you of those who are giving very much less?

# CHAPTER V.

"The bell strikes one, we take no note of time
But from its loss: to give it then a tongue
Is wise in man."

—Dr. E. Young.

## CHAPTER V.

### *WHEN TO OFFER IT.*

> "The bell strikes one, we take no note of time
> But from its loss: to give it then a tongue
> Is wise in man."—Dr. E. Young.

It is just as important as anything we have said heretofore to know when God's portion may be offered to Him.

It should be presented, first and foremost, during Divine Worship on the Lord's Day. Love is one of the primary characteristics of true worship, as Dr. Boyd says: "The law of acceptable Christian worship is briefly this—that it must be the worship of the heart. Not of the voice merely, nor of the hands merely; not of the bended knees merely; not of the decorously and comprehensively expressed prayer merely; not of the gorgeously arrayed high priest, nor yet of the simple robed minister merely; not of feelings touched by old memories of our departed days, and of those who used to worship with us long ago, but who will worship with us on earth no more; not of any or all of these things merely, but of the *heart.*" It is love which moves the souls of the

redeemed in the Church Triumphant as they render lofty worship in the upper sanctuary, and sing in resounding chorus; "Unto Him who has *loved* us." * Their thrilling love finds expression in their adoration; and what is a fundamental principle of the worship of the Church in heaven is also of the Church on earth. There can be no divergence or disagreement here, for they are one, having "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." † Genuine love is not satisfied by the mere interchange of sentiments and feelings, but ever seeks in some more material and substantial form to ratify and intensify such expressions. This is manifested in daily life, seen in the contributions men make to their special loves—to politics, art, and pleasure. What fascinates the eye, the ear, the intellect, the hand supports. A love which shows itself in soft and soothing words is but a sham on the real thing unless verified by corresponding actions. "Love," says Professor Vinet, "has for its motto, Everything for God and nothing for me." So if we would worship God truly we should present not only oral expressions of love in songs of praise and in prayer, but we should offer to Him some of the worldly substance He has lent us. The Church then should make *provision* for, and carefully receive, the loving manifestations of every worshipper. To deny a congregation of God's people, because of their lowly estate, the opportunity of performing this *act of worship*, is to strike a misguided blow at the very root-life of all genuine worship. Worship and offer-

* Rev. i. 5. † Eph. iv. 5.

ings have been associated from the earliest times. Abraham paid a tenth to Melchizedek at their celebrated meeting. This was evidently a religious act, as St. Paul observes in his Epistle to the Hebrews.* Melchizedek, God's priest, the type of His Son as revealed to Christians, brought forth the most significant elements of bread and wine, then gave him the blessing of the Most High: Here we have the highest spiritual import—and *then*, Abraham, as a proof of his love, in lowly and devout obedience to the Almighty, offered to him *His* tenth.

Jacob, having been blessed with a vision of God, awed by His presence, engages in an act of worship: the place whereon he slept becomes to him the house of God, he consecrates it a permanent sanctuary by the outpouring of oil, an element in later times declared to be typical of the Holy Spirit, and then the corroboration of his worship appears in his vow of a tenth.

The distinct command to Israel as to worship was: "Let *none* appear before the Lord empty."† Again it is given in another form: "Bring an offering, and come into His courts."‡ The Jews regarded an offering as essential a part of worship as singing, or praise, or prayer, and that from Divine teaching. God very severely rebuked them by the mouth of His prophets when they ignored this part of their duty.§ And why? Not because anything that human hands could withhold could impoverish Him who owneth all things, but because

* Chap. vii. † Deut. xvi. 16.
‡ Ps. xcvi. 8. § Isa. xliii. 22–24; Jer. viii. 18.

it was a striking manifestation that their *love* for Him had ceased, and that they sought pleasure in strange gods. Were the special *needs* of worship to be met; then, over and above their consecrated portion, they were to meet those needs by free-will offerings, as seen in the erection of the Tabernacle or of the Temple, and at a later date in the repair of the latter. The trumpet-mouthed treasury was the receptacle for the outcome of their sincere devotion.*

We know a treasury existed in the Church in the earthly days of our Saviour. Its immediate vicinity was not devoid of interest to Him. Whilst there must have been many places which He could not, humanly speaking, have visited, this was not among the number. St. John says: "These words spake Jesus in the treasury as He taught in the temple." † The Rabbins tell us that this treasury contained thirteen brazen chests, wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. It may be thought that Christ was there because of the concourse of the people. That may have been a factor in determining His presence, but His interest in what was going on was none the less for that. He was so intent that "He *sat* over against the treasury" and observed "*how* men cast in." Their offerings and the loving spirit in which they were given were a matter of concern to Him, so much so that He reckoned the value of each gift, hence He knew the offering of the poor widow who put into the treasury *two* mites. He estimated them

* *Vide* Exod. xxxv., xxxvi.; 1 Chron. xxix.; 2 Kings xii. 1, 9.

† John viii. 20

by their current value, it is true, but here He did not stop. He esteemed them as He does all gifts by the *heart love* which could give up all for God, and as a demonstration of spiritual life He declared them to be more than all the other offerings.

The whole circumstances are of importance to us. Amongst the many lessons they teach, we may gather that the Head of the Church does not dissociate worship and offering; that in the latter He is deeply interested, watching the gift of every offerer, and regarding it as a test of faith and love.

If then offerings be an essential part of Christian worship, we will undoubtedly expect to find some apostolic direction for the furtherance of such on that day which God has set apart for His worship. Such direction we have laid down by St. Paul: "Upon the *first day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him." * We will not attempt to prove the identity of the Lord's Day with the Sabbath of the Old Dispensation, but we will accept the general belief that the one, by Divine purpose, corresponds with the other, and that the change from the seventh to the first day of the week has made no change in the ancient institution itself. As professing Christians we may gather from the inspired teaching of the Apostle, that we should endeavour to estimate our prosperity, and, in the light of Scripture teaching, lay by "in store" week by week, and do this with the object of giving to God, as He gives us oppor-

* 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

tunity. Now the first day of the week, which is the Lord's Day, is to us the day of worship; here, then, the opportunity is provided by Divine direction for offering His own to God during public worship.

The very suitability of this time may be said to be a collateral proof of its inspired appointment. At public worship, on His own day, God is specially present in His sanctuary. His presence fills immensity, yet in a special sense He is present amongst the assemblies of His people. What more suitable than to present our proportionate offerings in His special presence?

Our offerings to Him should be accompanied with *prayer*. This enables us to be sincere in our offering, and anxious that not only what we give should be according to His will, but also that it should to the fullest measure accomplish that will. The amounts offered are comparatively of little value in themselves, but with the Divine blessing resting upon them they may accomplish much: that blessing is obtainable by prayer. It is an act of sovereign condescension on the part of God to receive our offerings at all, and it is meet that we should pray that they may be accepted. Petition invariably attends offerings made to earthly sovereigns, how much more should it attend ours made to the King of kings. It is instructive to note that alms and prayer are so often associated in the New Testament. Cornelius was described as a man who "gave much alms to the people and prayed to God alway." * What more

* Acts x. 2.

suitable place for prayer and offering than God's Church, the house of prayer? and what more suitable time than during public worship? What we have said of prayer may also be said of *faith*. It is written: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." * Then our offerings should be given in the exercise of faith; indeed, true prayer involves faith. We need faith to believe God will accept us and our feeble tribute, and that He will verify His promise to us. Cain made an offering, but not in true faith, and it was rejected; so will our offerings be if they are not accompanied with this living trust. In public worship spiritual things often become more real to us than at other times, and we feel we can rest on God more confidingly. Giving in God's Church as an act of worship is a stimulus to faith.

*Humility* is essentially a Christian virtue. We owe to Christianity the very word as we now understand it. Wesley says: "The whole Roman language, even with all the improvements of the Augustan age, does not afford so much as a name for humility—the word whence we borrow this, as is well known, bearing in Latin quite a different meaning; no, nor was one found in all the copious language of the Greeks till it was made by the great apostle." Rochefoucauld says: "Humility is the altar on which God desires us to offer sacrifices to Him." To offer God any of our substance in a meritorious or self-righteous spirit is but to insult the Almighty. After we have done all that we are commanded: "We are unpro-

* Heb. ix. 6.

fitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." * A true Christian is filled with humility as he beholds God in nature, as he sees in a drop of water unnumbered forms of life, on a solitary leaf a teeming population, in things large or small an infinite mechanism.

In public worship on the Lord's Day the believer's soul is impressed by God's presence with feelings of humility and reverence, a fitting time then to present to its Maker its offering of faith and love. There is, therefore, we judge, no place so suitable for making that offering as God's house, during public worship on the Lord's Day.

The day itself is one of rest and quietude, when the soul is best fitted to review the past, recount God's bounty, and be filled with gratitude; when the mind is borne upward and onward to the eternal day of God, and the place where His people live in the light of His countenance, and are ever *giving* their whole being to Him. The Sabbath is an epoch in the flight of time, which reminds us that life is transient, and that we as stewards must soon give account of our Lord's money. What day so suitable to awaken a sense of duty, and to present offerings! On this day we are reminded of Him who was God's greatest gift to us, through Whom all worship alone is acceptable, by Whom we may enjoy a glorious resurrection, an inheritance with the redeemed; and as our minds are called to His inestimable sacrifice of Himself, what can be more

* Luke xvii. 10.

calculated to stimulate our love, and cause us to bring forth our offerings!

Yes, and it also recalls to us the fact that on this day the Holy Spirit was outpoured. His unction is felt as the multitude of worshippers join in sacred song, or plead in prayer, or hear God's truth.

The teaching of Christ by His presence in the Treasury is borne out by the instruction of the apostles: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him."* This being so, we hold it to be the emphatic duty of *every* church to carefully plan and carry out such offering, giving the greatest facility to each worshipper to present to his Lord what love and duty may dictate; to give the offertory an equal place with every other portion of public worship: and it is the duty of each individual Christian to present in that offering his *proportionate* gift to God. "That is all very well for the simple days of the apostles," says one, "but it could not be done in these days of credit and business intricacy. Offering proportionately to prosperity, week by week, is a different thing now." We know full well there are some who will not be able to tell what their profit will be for a month or a year, but in reviewing the *mass* of men, such cases are few. They can be easily settled by taking a comprehensive view, and estimating by the Scriptural ratio. A conscientious man can come near to his just income tax, and the ingenuity which will enable him to compass the

* 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

one problem will enable him also to decide the other.

Not one is exempt from this duty to whom God has given. "Every one of you," says the Apostle. The manifestation of the love of the poor is as precious to God as that of the wealthy. The widow's mites were exceedingly precious to Christ. To withhold the opportunity of giving an offering from any of those to whom God has given even a *little* is to obscure this blessed fact. It is to draw an invidious distinction, which often sensitive and pious souls feel much. Give then the same occasion to the fingers bent with toil as to the delicate hand flashing with rubies and amethysts.

In visiting some churches we have been astonished and grieved to see this occasion denied to those who sat in "free seats," evidently on the ground of their apparently low position in life, and we are thoroughly convinced that more Scriptural teaching would destroy this practice. One of the designs of Christianity is to give to all men equal religious privileges, and the opportunity of offering at public worship in God's sanctuary is undoubtedly a religious privilege, for *true* offering is, as we have shown, a religious act, a manifestation of humility, faith, prayer, and love to God.

We think it right here to notice, that such offering as we have referred to, during public worship on the Lord's Day, would be a strong check to covetousness. As the amount of money we make increases, so the tendency to this sin increases, until eventually

we refuse to spend money on the necessaries of life. It is said of Mrs. Graham of New York, who made it a rule of showing her love to God by giving at least a tenth of her income, that on one occasion having made a profit of £1000 on a speculation, she said: "Quick! quick! let me appropriate God's portion ere my heart grows hard," so strongly did she feel the innate tendency to this sin.

It is quite plain that it exists in our churches on each Lord's Day. Hence in the majority of them the amount of copper is out of all proportion to other coins. Wardens and treasurers are continually burdened with the superabundance of farthings, halfpennies, and pence, some of which indeed are base coin; and not infrequently are these estimable gentlemen disposed to put a foreign construction on the Apostle's words, and say: "Alexander the coppersmith hath done me much evil." Whilst these offerings may be the *proportionate* gifts of some they cannot be of all. From some they go before God not as the outcome of love and duty, but as exhibitions of covetousness. What a solemn thought! We are persuaded, however, that parting with money every Lord's Day at public worship is a check on this sin—particularly if our offering is a proportionate one—a healthy discipline of the soul, a check under those *influences* which are best calculated to eradicate it, and at a time when we are most likely to feel the spell of hallowed surroundings and our indebtedness to God. Nor let the potency of these influences be doubted because there are some, who,

notwithstanding them, exhibit covetousness, for what would many of these persons give apart from public worship? We fear much *less* than they do now, and what perfection may they not arrive at, if these good influences continue to prevail. They may be working gradually, but, like many of God's mightiest forces, surely, and it is not for us in any way to hinder them, but the very reverse.

Take another view. Offering, we have seen, is a duty, but it is more, it is a *privilege*. God in nature and providence distributes His bounty through agents. Every breath of wind and burst of sunshine are his agents, by which He distributes blessing. We are privileged in being permitted to imitate Him by distributing blessings to others through Christian agencies. He has made us also His agents to perform His purposes. To this end He has been pleased to place no small powers, monetary and otherwise, in our hand, under our keeping and stewardship. He need not have done this. The Almighty is not limited in agencies. But He has done so that we may be distributors of those resources for the evangelisation of the world, and be helpers with Him in a plan of world-wide redemption, a consummation which is unspeakably dear to Him, and in which the hierarchy of heaven is profoundly interested.

Fancy yourself called into the presence of Her Majesty, made the bearer of a special mission, an almoner of some of her wealth. You would feel honoured; but you are in a somewhat similar sense so honoured at this moment. You have a special mone-

tary trust from the King of kings, with a *choice* of exercising it in various channels. You are His almoner. In the distribution of that trust you are a co-worker with an ever present Royalty.

Surpassing privilege! Verily, if we as professing Christians have not felt this before, it is because selfishness and sin have blunted our moral sensibilities and blinded us, so that we cannot see or appreciate our Royal functions.

Talk of offering as a drudgery, a thing to be quietly neglected! It is an inestimable privilege, the full compass of which eternity alone will reveal. But what season can be more suitable for the exercise of this duty and privilege than the first day of the week during public worship.

Let every worshipper on the Lord's Day remember then, that one of Christ's *tests* of his love is his offering to Him; that He is deeply interested in it; that human hands receive it for *Him*; that, if he professes to be a Christian but withholds his offering, he denies his profession every time he does so; that Christ by revelation is said to be "worthy to receive RICHES;"* that if he gives nominally of his income as a mere *solatium* to conscience, he practically denies revelation, and says He is unworthy; that His eye is all-seeing, and that He regards his offering by the spirit with which he gives as also by the proportion he *retains;* that if he keeps the gold and the silver, and offers Him the copper, he proves his own self love, and but mocks Him; that carefully as he

* Rev. v. 12.

arranges his appearance in the church upon the Lord's Day, he should even more carefully *arrange* to give to God a proportionate offering; that monetary transactions should not be neglected, but take place with God in His Church on that day, for such are the *place* and *time* when offerings may best be presented to Him.

But let it be understood that during Divine Worship is not the only time when we may offer to God, —there are many other suitable occasions. We have mentioned the church first, because time and usage give it such a precedence, and it stands specially near to God. The Jews provided first for their Church, and under the Christian dispensation such provision takes no inferior place. Public worship is of the highest import, and should be of the highest consideration.

"On the first day of the week," the Apostle says, "lay by in store as God has prospered." He does not say that all store is to be offered through one channel, but that it is to be put by "at home" or "by oneself," and by inference we add, to be used for godly purposes. Having deducted then from our proportionate store what we with a good conscience think due to God in public worship, the remainder may be offered in other channels. If it be asked, What channels? We reply such as we believe to be for the advancement of His work and cause; for example, home and foreign missions, the training of young men for the ministry, the education of the young, the building of churches in poor neighbourhoods, the evangelization of the Jews, temperance

societies in connection with the Church, orphanages, hospitals, refuges, reformatories, societies for the amelioration of the condition of the poor, and other genuine causes, and we might add those channels which lie closest to our hearts, because it is very essential that our sympathies and offerings should go hand in hand.

But let our offerings be *timely*. Institutions as well as individuals have times of depression. Some favour certain institutions; as these supporters decline or fail, and the needs of such institutions become pressing, then our offerings will be specially acceptable and useful to them. It is comparatively easy for us to gain this information. Institutions that are well off, and likely to be so, need not have so much of our consideration.

There are times when help is *specially* needful. It is wise and merciful to assist our fellow-men before their spirit is broken, and they are swallowed up by distress. Many a soul has gone down in the storm of life, when a helping hand at a certain moment would have saved him. There is a time often in the youthful life when it might be saved from evil influences, or when a little aid would keep it on a course, which would, as years rolled on, be very beneficial. When a widow is in her deepest distress, then is pre-eminently the time to perform your godly office towards her. It is often very difficult to find out such occasions, particularly from those who are struggling with enforced appearances and poverty, but they amply repay our study and care. No one

is more likely to better acquaint us with them than those who minister to spiritual wants. Many a tale of bitter woe is heard by a clergyman's ear which none other hears.

A Christian doctor was seated in a company of friends assembled in a drawing-room: as the bell rang for supper, a servant came to say he was wanted. He rose in obedience to the summons, but his hostess urged him to postpone his departure if but for half an hour: "Madam," he replied, "I may save a patient that half hour of pain which I could not if I stayed here." So, by timely giving we may save needless pain, and shed joy in a troubled heart. Remember, it is written: "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." *

Again, if the question "When?" be asked. We say, When we can choose the quietest methods; avoiding, if possible, the semblance of ostentation, that our benefactions may be like oil, which, when poured from one vessel to another, flows in silence and with soft and gentle fall.

And to the "How?" of the inquirer we reply, With due discrimination. St. Chrysostom says: "He who gives well, without dividing well, sins." God discriminates in all His gifts. The bright-winged birds of the tropic regions have not the sweet song of those of duller plumage in our own land; the gayest flowers have not always the choicest perfumes; the fleet and fascinating zebra has not

* Prov. iii. 27, 28.

the docility and quiet winsomeness of the shaggy Shetland pony; the strength of Samson was not combined with the wisdom of Solomon, nor the genius of a Newton with the daring of a Livingstone.

Amongst the many reasons which can be found as to why Christ raised the widow's son, the ruler's daughter, and His beloved Lazarus, not the least may be, that one was an *only* son, another an *only* daughter, and the other the *only* brother of orphan sisters.

Let us follow this teaching and exercise discrimination. It is God's money you are giving. Reckless charity has been productive of pauperism and crime. It is a baneful folly and much to be eschewed.

Lastly to the question "When?" we reply, Give frequently. If we lay by in store and allow money to accumulate, we may, in looking at the bulk, be prompted to think it is too much to give. The giving of very large sums has a tendency to raise that spirit in the human heart which found voice centuries ago in that memorable speech: "Is not this Babylon the great that I have builded." * Moreover, comparatively small sums are more easily parted with, and have results beyond what we often think. A person who gives, say sixpence, at each service in church, does not think it much, but if, at the end of the year, he were asked for two pounds twelve, it would look to him, perhaps, a serious item, yet he does not think it such when distri-

* Dan. iv. 30.

buted over an extended period. Give, then, frequently, and in so doing make the ultimate object Him, who has cast a halo of divinity around each feeble offering by those magic words: "Ye did it unto Me."

# CHAPTER VI.

"The lessons of prudence have charms,
And slighted may lead to distress;
But the man whom benevolence warms,
Is an angel who lives but to bless."

—BLOOMFIELD.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *ITS ADVANTAGES.*

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> And slighted may lead to distress;
> But the man whom benevolence warms,
> Is an angel who lives but to bless."
>
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IT cannot be doubted that there are some who will say that this work should have been reserved for more prosperous times, but even then would it be considered more readily than at present, or meet with a better reception by those who thus think? They may urge, that, in a season of commercial depression when losses have been of such magnitude, many are either comparatively poor or completely impoverished, and therefore it is inopportune to begin the practice of the principles herein laid down. We reply that, in the exercise of these scriptural principles in a proper spirit, men do not become impoverished, and that there is no loss. It may be with some, that in parting with money the idea of loss has ever been present, but that of personal advantage never.

We cannot help being struck with the fact that

several of those persons, whose offerings to God have been left as examples for us to follow, gave in what were undoubtedly "hard times" to them, and when their circumstances were more straitened perhaps than those of most of our readers.

A woman of Sarepta is brought before our notice in the first book of Kings.* A famine is in the land, and she is in dire circumstances. Hearken to her mournful confession: "I have not a cake, but an handful of meal and a little oil in a cruse." The shadow of death is reflected in her gaunt and worn features; she is in the last extremity: "I am gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die," she says. Yet God's prophet is sent to her, and on her scanty resources she acknowledges God's claim and gives the prophet sustenance.

The widow in the Treasury of the Temple is so poor that all she has may be compassed in those significant words, "two mites," yet these she offers to God with a free and trustful spirit.

Jacob, in journeying to Haran on that memorable night when he had such a blessed revelation from God, was evidently a poor man: the whole of his worldly goods were seemingly the raiment which he wore and a staff.†

Alone he pressed his solitary way; fatigued and wearied with travel he sought rest, the earth his bed, a stone his pillow, the heavens his canopy. Yet it is under these circumstances we find him

* xvii. 8–24. † Gen. xxxii. 10.

covenanting for the *necessaries* of life, "food and raiment," and vowing to give God His portion. What a splendid example there is here for men beginning life to break through the bonds of selfishness and acknowledge God's claim on them.

Many more examples might be added, but what of these? Was there any *loss?* No, but a positive *advantage.* Poor Jacob is so blessed that he rises to be a man of riches and importance. We read of his flocks and his herds—his two hundred she-goats, twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams, his camels, colts, kine, foals, servants, and sons; his earthly possessions had so multiplied that they were embraced in two camps. The lonely traveller had become a God-made prince.*

To the woman of Sarepta was returned her simple benefaction, with more than an increase of a thousandfold; the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail. Did the widow whom Christ eulogised lose? We dare not suppose so. The pity and boundless love of Christ forbid the very thought. She looked beyond her poverty, and acted from a sense of duty and privilege. If she knew Christ's estimate of her gift, if she read its record on the sacred page of God's Holy Word, or heard His commendation, she lost not but gained immensely. Ah! hard times are but a poor excuse for overlooking God's claims and dishonouring Him by distrust. Ay! in such a course there is irretrievable loss. Hard times press more hardly on the poor than on

* Gen. xxxii.

those who are better off, and therefore their claims are much stronger at such periods.

When Noah came out of the Ark with, so far as he knew, a depopulated world before him, he sacrificed to God clean beasts, and of every clean fowl. To the keen business eye this would seem folly, with such a limited stock and so wide an area to be filled. Yet we see that there was no subsequent loss. God promises that the seasons shall continue in their course, producing seedtime and harvest; that the earth shall never again be deluged; and in surety of this He gives His heaven-set bow.

Amongst the many potentates of the earth none was so wealthy, wise, and magnificent as Solomon. Kingdoms have waxed and waned, yet they have brought forth none, who, in these respects, have been his compeer, and it is significant to observe that he was the man whose father made the largest offering to Jehovah. We could recount many instances where men have put in practice the principles we enunciate, and the confession of their own lips has been, that, in proportion as they exercised these privileges, they prospered, some amassing wealth, some gaining distinction, and all unfeigned respect; but we have never heard one who conscientiously owned to loss. If rich and poor, nobles and mechanics, merchant princes and tradesmen, who profess Christianity, would practise this Christian principle, they would find it to be to their great gain.

In the economy of God it appears to be a fundamental rule, that, in ministering to Him through

others, we find the basis of our own weal. The pregnant clouds give to the earth their teeming abundance, but receive again the vapour which repletes them, and He who made these very clouds applies the same principle to us. Listen to His words: "Give and it shall be given to you full measure, pressed down and running over." *

Ruskin, in his "Lamp of Sacrifice," says: "God never forgets any work or labour of love, and whatever it may be of which the *first* and best portions or powers have been presented to Him, He will multiply and increase sevenfold." Straitened circumstances test us. If we cannot trust the Author and Preserver of our life under them, will we be more likely to do so when more favourably situated?

He, who has commanded us to *honour* Him with our substance, and with the *first*-fruits of our increase, † has also said: "Them that honour me I will honour." ‡ Profit, or loss, is not always the result of our keenest calculations, but if we will let our feeble reason be enlightened by the teaching of God's infinite mind we shall see this and many other subjects in new and wondrous aspects.

An infidel once said that he had watched closely many Christians, and he found in them some strange exhibitions of inconsistency, not the least of which was, that though few seemed to disbelieve God's promises as to the future, yet they did not seem to have so full a belief as to His promises for the present. It is thoroughly true that many professing

* Luke ii. 38. † Prov. iii. 9, 10. ‡ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

Christians never doubt the promises of God as to heaven: they revel in them, they sing of them with the fullest expression of soul, they are in their highest element as they hear the preacher set forth the glories of Beulah, Pisgah, and Canaan, they are captivated with the gold and jasper and brilliance of heaven—sure they are of these things, but they are not quite certain as to whether God means all He says as to *time*, as to whether, if they trust Him here and give Him that which is His and on which He lays His claim, He will honour their trust and bless them. They do not say it in so many words, for they have considerable diffidence in expressing themselves in this manner, it might not be thought quite orthodox; but they, by their actions and contracted views, show us they think it. How inconsistent! If God's word is true concerning eternity, it must be true as regards time, and the man whose faith is only strong as to the future, dishonours God in the present and thus forfeits his prospective happiness; but the offering to God of His portion is advantageous, in that it helps to abolish this inconsistency, stimulates faith, takes away reproach from the professing Christian, and shows others by *practical* test, that the word of the Divine Being is as sure for time as eternity.

Now and then it happens that some swift steamer laden with passengers, specie, and cargo, is detained upon the mighty deep; the propeller has broken down, the engines are disarranged, and the day marked for her arrival at her destined port sees her

not there. As time wears on how interest in her safety is increased; ever and anon the steamship managers hasten to the various offices to put on insurance, the telegraph is often set in motion, the bulletins in reading-rooms are eagerly perused, the captains of incoming vessels are closely questioned, the coast-guard on the headland looks through his glass frequently to discern every speck on the horizon. Why this concern on the part of the managers? In a great measure, because they may have money themselves invested in the vessel, and because they are responsible for the money paid for her by others. So we think, where money is invested, there will, as a rule, be concern,* increasing or otherwise, with the rise, or fall, or jeopardy of the investment. If we gave God the proportionate sum of income that has been set forth, and, as managers or stewards, which we are for Him, put it into religious and philanthropic causes for the good of those who are His, our concern in these would be exceedingly increased. Fewer printed reports would be put into the wastepaper basket, they would be read: for as honourable men we would seek to invest for God in the best and most needy spheres. The management of churches, institutions, and charities would be a subject of concern. We would see that they were carried on in the most efficient manner. Their failure would extort from us two all-important questions: How have they failed? And why? This is the very

* "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."—Matt. vi. 21.

kind of concern which at this moment is much needed, and is lacking, we believe, because too generally "God's fraction" is lacking also; an increase of the one would mean an increase of the other.

Look over the broad face of nature—examine the various species of animals, and you will find their faculties varying in a very considerable degree. But man far surpasses them all. His lordship has been established by several prominent endowments. The power of intelligent speech is not found amongst animals of even the highest instinct. The parrot utters its chatter, but is unconscious of the meaning of the words it imitates, and which are limited by its surroundings. The monkey, the horse, and the dog look at us sometimes with an earnestness of expression which fancy at times leads us to say for them: "We would speak if we could." The faculty of worship is not discoverable in that portion of the animal creation which most nearly approaches man, neither is that of beneficence. These faculties were reserved by the Creator for the "sons of men;" to exercise them as we suggest is one of man's peculiar privileges, and to set them forth is one of the methods by which he honours his Creator, and proves true to the talents committed to his keeping.

Natural powers, we know, will deteriorate, if they are not exercised, and indeed will become lost from lack of use; so with the *power* of giving: this, doubtless, is the reason why many, who have not used the power during the earlier part of life, find it well nigh impossible to do so in declining years—the highest

motives are appealed to with the utmost fervour, yet, alas! without effect.

Acting as we point out would assist us to live in the enjoyment of our powers, and thereby reflect *benefit on ourselves.* We say enjoyment, for it cannot be denied that an All-wise Providence has so constituted us, that pleasure is attached to the legitimate exercise of every power.

The first use of any faculty which has lain unexercised will not always bring pleasure; the eye, if suddenly exposed to the sun, will experience pain; or, the unused muscle when first brought into action will cause a twinge, but a judicious use of both will be repaid by the greatest pleasure: ultimately, the eye resting on the smiling landscape will fill the soul with rapture. So, giving God his proportionate fraction from a sense of duty may not at first give pleasure, but it ultimately will. The frequent performance of any deed increases in us a disposition to repeat it, until a new habit is formed, and with the new habit we shall experience a new pleasure. Laying by in store week by week, and giving week by week, will produce a pleasure of which we would not willingly be deprived. When we see the benefits accruing to the Church and to the world at large as the result of our giving, this gratification will be certain, particularly if we are firm believers in a Divine Revelation. Of this fact we have practical demonstration in the lives of many of the best men, who in the end have found their difficulty to be "not to give." One of Bishop

Burnet's flock was cited for debt, and came to him for some small assistance. When the Bishop inquired from him how much would clear off his debt, and set him up in his trade, the debtor named a sum which a servant was at once ordered to pay. "Sir," said the domestic, "it is all there is in the house." "Well, well," replied Burnet, "pay it to this poor man; you do not know the *pleasure* there is in making a man glad." It was doubtless, in no small degree too, this pleasure which caused the Reverend John Wesley during fifty years of his life to so deny himself, that he gave away more than thirty thousand pounds, and so reduced his plate, that in 1776 he was the possessor of only four silver spoons, two in London and two in Bristol.

We once heard a man, whose doctor had prescribed for him a bitter tonic, say that the first time he took it he felt the liquid to be nauseous, "but," he added, "having taken it frequently it became more palatable, until now I like it, and it does me good." So, some who read the duty advocated herein may at first feel it rather irksome, but let them put the principle into action, and eventually they will say: "Now I like it, and it does me good."

A clergyman, sailing along the east coast of England, noticed that the vessel in which he was did not answer to her helm very quickly, so he asked the man at the wheel how it was: "Ah," was the reply," she has got poor lines, sir, poor lines." The clergyman, observing the notice "Not to speak to the man at the wheel," went into the saloon musing as

to what the "lines" might be. Returning homeward in another ship, he observed that the moment the steersman touched the wheel, the ship immediately answered to the rudder; he asked for an explanation, and was told it was because the ship had "fine lines, sir, fine lines." So hereditary influences act upon us more or less. Some are, it is alleged, naturally benevolent, others the very reverse; these traits show themselves in their possessors, even when children, consequently, their feelings at the commencement of the practice of giving and spending for God may be varied by constitution; but however this may be, the final result will be one of pleasure, and they will look on such subjects as the present, not as levers for extracting money, but as instruments designed to cause them no small gratification.

Mariners shipwrecked on our coasts are rescued by our gallant lifeboat service, yet all are not saved in *exactly* the same way. Although there are laws and regulations laid down for the guidance of rescuers, still there are many details which cannot be pre-arranged, owing to the widely differing conditions and surroundings affecting both savers and those to be saved. So, all men are not saved from sin in exactly the same way: some are led to put their trust in God by the fear of sin's consequences; others by a sense of duty towards those over whom they are placed as guardians, and of duty to God; the great majority, by a love begotten in them by the boundless manifestation of God's love towards them

individually, in Christ's atoning sacrifice; but in each case, we think, if life be spared, there will be an advance from such lower motives to higher, until love to God is the absorbing power of the soul, casting out every inferior feeling.

Thus, though men give God His fraction from the lower motive of fear, as to their responsibility, and the attendant consequences, or from a mere sense of duty, why may not *eventually* God-love be experienced? Why may not offering week by week in a conscientious spirit sooner or later awaken deep reflection? Then, may not the inner man see that the little gift offered is but poor, unless springing from faith and love; and the momentous question of self-dedication press itself upon the soul until the claims of love reign supreme? "Frequent money getting for self strengthens money love and self-love, frequent getting money for God and devoting it to Him, strengthens love of God until the love power predominates."* "Ah," you say, "I never thought about this subject as a *means* of leading to salvation." Just dwell upon it and you may find it so. Granting this to be the issue in some, we again arrive at the point we have just previously demonstrated, that the offering to God of His proportionate fraction is a means to produce a *new* pleasure; for what so satisfactory as to love and be loved by God.

Now other benefits will follow. We remember waiting upon a good man, who had plenty of worldly substance, for a contribution. At first he refused, and

* Moncrieff.

entered into an argument with us as to his duty to comply. After long conversation, he replied; "Well, I suppose you must have it—you have fairly beaten me into it;" this was not offering from a true motive. We are here reminded of the story Dean Ramsay tells of a certain laird in Fife, well known for his parsimonious habits. Whilst his substance largely increased, he did not augment his liberality, and his weekly offering never exceeded the sum of one penny. One day, however, by mistake, he dropped into the plate at the door a five shilling piece, but discovering his error before he was seated in his pew, hurried back, and was about to replace the sum by his customary penny, when the elder in attendance cried out, "Stop, laird; ye may put *in* what ye like, but ye maun tak naething *out!*" The laird, finding his explanation went for nothing, at last said, "Aweel, I suppose I'll get credit for it in heaven." "Na, na, laird," said the elder, "ye'll only get credit for the penny." Now if a sense of pleasure and love reigns, it will induce and keep alive a proper motive in offering. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," * and to grudge God what is His own is a sin of no small magnitude. Much of the giving in our day is not cheerful, else whence those deep and solemn grumblings about the frequency of appeals in behalf of religious and charitable purposes? Or, whence those dark frowns and surly remarks when money is given? and which plainly say—"I will give you for this time, but don't call

* 2 Cor. ix. 7.

again:" surely these things should not be. But get people to lay by weekly in store, to provide, as the Apostle directs, a proportionate fund to meet the claims of God in religion and charity, and this being done, there will be, when such appeals are made, something to draw upon, and consequently offering will cease to be a source of dissatisfaction: such prearrangement will tend to the "willing mind" the Apostle speaks of as necessary to a true act of offering.*

Moreover, it will render easy the task of those whose privilege it is to care for the concerns of religious and philanthropic institutions. The collectors will be received with pleasure and brightness, and will be thanked for taking the trouble of calling and representing the claims of that portion of the Divine work, in which the subscriber is particularly interested.

A mighty change will be wrought. Givers will rejoice and feel grateful for having suitable and worthy channels brought under their notice, wherein they can safely invest "God's portion" committed to them.

In the history of nations as well as of individuals there are times of great joy, when the national heart is thrilled with rapture, and the voice lifted in song. Such periods are memorable. What excitement existed during the Indian Mutiny! The eyes of the nation were concentrated on the remnant of our garrisons and loyal subjects under imminent peril of death from starvation and treacherous Sepoys.

* 2 Cor. viii. 2.

What satisfaction there was, too, when they were relieved by our gallant troops, whom we sent out in hot haste to subdue the insurgents, and bring deliverance.

In our imagination we can picture to ourselves the throbbing pulses of the beleaguered garrison, as they heard in the dim distance the first faint sounds of our Highland bagpipes, every heart beating more quickly as they came nearer and nearer, and grew louder and louder, telling of liberty in every note; the rapture of our Highlanders as they caught the first glimpse of the pale and emaciated faces of those who had waited long for their coming; the warm hand clasp of Havelock and his officers with Outram, Campbell, and their companions in arms. Brave men wept with tears of joy; for, thank God! there are Englishmen who can weep as well as fight, and, as the news reached our shores, one loud "God be praised" went up to heaven from city, town, and hamlet. *We* had sent *our* troops to their release, and a kind Providence had granted them success. The joy of those who stayed at home for duty was not one whit behind that of those who went abroad.

We may not be able to go into the places of poverty and want, stoop beside the dying and tell them of the love of Christ, raise the fallen and carry in our own hand the Gospel to the benighted heathen, but we can lovingly give our proportionate fraction in the name of God for these objects, and as we know of the rescues that have been effected, the sorrows that have been ameliorated, the souls that have been

lifted from the fear of death to the peace of heaven, a blessed joy and comfort will be our inalienable reward. From this the selfish soul will be debarred.

One of the leading questions of our own day is thrift. Numerous essays and pamphlets have been written on the subject, and the State, by various Acts of Parliament, and by its Post-Office Savings Bank, is endeavouring to encourage it. We think the practice of the subject on which we write is a factor to its promotion. In connection with a certain church within our knowledge, it has been the custom for years past to have a congregational trip, or day in the country, to meet the expenses of which each person subscribes twopence per week. The esteemed incumbent told us a remarkable instance of how a family was benefited thereby. They were in poor circumstances, yet began to subscribe weekly for their children to have their day's out in the summer. The parents, finding clothes would be needed for the occasion, contributed a small sum weekly to a clothing fund. The day for the summer trip came round and was enjoyed thoroughly, but there were other results. The parents, finding so much could be accomplished with what appeared to them to be so little, and having formed the habit of each week putting away a limited sum, began to take a wider view of the question, and thought they might gradually put away a small amount for business purposes: this they did. The result was a small capital, which, with the frugal habits that were formed, has at this hour raised their social position very considerably.

A similar system of weekly dedication to God of that which is His will tend to the same end. Such dedication is calculated to produce the best influence on the soul, whilst the self-denial which is practised for this will stimulate self-denial for other purposes, and a consequent advance in circumstances with due care will follow; thoughtless extravagance will be studiously avoided; reckoning to find God's portion week by week will produce a healthy and conserving influence on the entire income, which in these days is so much to be desired. Nor are we surprised at this, for it follows as surely as day succeeds night that when we honestly and lovingly try to do our duty to God in *any* respect, we are ourselves the recipients of blessing. All God's laws have been made for this purpose and constantly tend thereto. This view, we think, is worthy of the best attention of moralists, philanthropists, and professing Christians.

Again, the adoption of this principle will produce a healthy spirit of independence. In looking over the printed yearly balance-sheets of some churches, and the annual reports of various institutions, we cannot help observing how people are influenced in their giving by what others in or about their station in life give. The collector is frequently asked: "What has Mr. A. or Mr. B. subscribed?" and when the amount is named, it is replied: "Well, I will give the same." Sometimes the giver overreaches his true ability, but oftener far goes much below it. We find the subscription the same year by year; the income has been steadily increas-

ing, it may be, but not so the contribution. If God's proportionate fraction were set aside, men would contribute what they conscientiously could afford, irrespective of Mr. A. or Mr. B. They would not be influenced either by the penuriousness or the reckless giving of others. Pride would receive a thoroughly well-deserved blow, for the testimony of "a good conscience" would be to them, as it was to the great Apostle of the Gentiles, a source of rejoicing, and they would really care little what the world thought of their offering as to its magnitude or diminutiveness. Worshippers would not withhold a full offering because of some slight endowment of the Church, but would consider its needs, and capabilities, and their own duty.

How to help the poor without pauperising them is one of the difficult questions of the time. Mission-halls and churches have been erected for their use, wherein they have not been expected to give, but merely to be the recipients of others' gifts. The clergyman they regard somewhat in the light of a Relieving Officer, whose duty it is to see to all their complaints and find the means of satisfying them; that *they* at any time should offer to God and His cause seems to be an idea far removed from their mental vision. When large benefactors to their church or mission-hall have died, the work carried on therein has been paralysed. But get the poor to learn their duty and privilege in giving back to God a portion of what He has given to them, and you will encourage the spirit of gratitude and independ-

ence—you will teach the great power of "littles" on the Church and on their own lives, and you will bring a blessing from Him who regardeth the smallest offering. We are fully persuaded that this principle is one of the chief factors in solving that difficult problem: "How to help the poor?"

Let it be also observed that from proportionately laying by in store, and then offering from that store, two other benefits will follow. We shall be able to be given to that hospitality of which the Apostle speaks in his Epistle to the Romans,* and God will be repeatedly brought into the ordinary business of life: this latter will afford an opportunity for spiritual influences in some measure to weigh against worldly attractions; these are results much to be desired in this present age.

But before we conclude this branch of our subject, let us look at some of the benefits arising to the Church. We know full well the potency of "common interest," how it united the men of the Northern States of America as one man to protect their Union, and to free the slave; how it has stimulated the Germans in recent wars to fight for Fatherland; how it has called forth the patriotism, energy, and wealth of our colonies to assist the mother country in the day of battle: though league upon league of ocean rolls between old England and her dependencies, though climes vary and even language differs, yet they have felt bound together by "common interest." We have seen a "common interest" in the faith taught

* Rom. xii. 13.

by the apostles bind a vast congregation composed of English, French, Italians, Germans, Dutch, and Americans as one man. Whilst the Very Reverend the Dean of Canterbury led them in the repetition of the Apostles' Creed, they have with one voice given expression to the deep feelings of their soul, "until the very atmosphere itself seemed instinct with living Christian truth, and pregnant with the hope of the life everlasting. Talk of sublimity! What have we seen so sublime as this? We have seen the wide expanse of ever rolling sea, roofed by the azure sky, and rimmed by the far and dim horison; we have seen great Niagara with its rush, its everlasting thunder, and its falling floods; we have seen the Rocky Mountains swelling from the plains in awful grandeur, and burying their snowy heads within the clouds above; we have seen in the deep shadows of the night the boundless prairie glowing and flaming far and near with encircling fire; we have seen above the plains of Nebraska the starry host —'worlds on worlds! amazing pomp!'—hung in lustrous glory from the cloudless void. Yes, all these we have seen, and we have pronounced them sublime: yet their aggregate sublimity seems to us less impressive, less imposing, less intensely moving, than the sight of that great assembly uniting with *one* heart and *one* voice in this ancient and comprehensive summary of the faith which was once delivered to the saints." *

* "Glimpses in America," p. 80. J. Nisbet & Co., 21 Berners Street W.

Such is the power and sublimity of a "common interest" when once roused; and what it has done in so many instances, it will do for the Church. By denying self and calculating how we may give cheerfully, steadily, and proportionately, there will be awakened a deep and "common interest" in the Church and in *each other*, which will enable us to overlook many trifling differences, blend heart with heart, foster that brotherly love which is the fruit of the Gospel, and present a sight to the cold and selfish world of unparalleled grandeur. The greater the sacrifices undergone for the common cause the stronger and closer the bonds of union.

Weekly and proportionate storing for God would materially increase the revenue and power for good of the Church. As a nation we have immense financial resources, as may be seen in the vast sum raised amongst us by imperial taxation amounting to some eighty-nine millions annually, we believe. Yet how little, comparatively, is given to the Church! But if the millionaire, the professional man, the merchant, the tradesman, the mechanic assessed himself conscientiously each week and offered the result to God, what a magnificent sum total there would be! a total equal, we think, to that now gathered for the support of the State.

No longer would there be poor attendances at some of our churches on the occasion of special offertories, or those spasmodic and exhausting efforts to raise money by, sometimes, questionable means.

Every man would have a fair idea of what he did

give, and not be in the position of a certain Christian who, with an income of £200 per annum, thought he gave a tenth, yet on reckoning found all his giving to amount to but £4, 7s. 9½d.

The Church would no longer be a loser from those who have good *intentions* but weak methods of carrying them out. Many now give little because they do so only at the end of the quarter, or at the close of the year, and many almost nothing, because God's fraction is not contemplated in their weekly expenditure, which almost balances their weekly income. Calculation would obviate all this, and God's cause would accordingly be benefited.

Furthermore, the needs of the ministry would be met with more justice than at present. Often the minds of spiritual young men, who would like to enter the ministry, are diverted from their purpose by solicitous friends, who lay before them the prospect of being "a poor curate," or of trying to exist on a "small living," and good and useful men are thereby lost to the Church. Were our system of giving carried out, ministers would be raised above the depressing anxiety attendant on the providing of family necessities, and they could then give their minds unfettered to their work, and so be enabled to discharge their duties with greater profit to those to whom they minister. They would likewise often be saved from being obliged to compromise their legitimate influence, and their more spiritual labours would be less marred by frequent and urgent appeals, at present necessary, on behalf of beneficent objects.

Of the desirableness of this it is needless to speak; nor do we think it necessary to prove that proportionate and weekly offering would effect it. We consider it sufficient to state that it was in the mind of the Apostle when he wrote the order about weekly storing. "That," said he, "there be no gatherings *when I come.*"

Some churches would not be so anxious for the appointment of *rich* men, for they could then offer a fair amount of things temporal for the ministration of things spiritual, and would consequently avoid the difficulty, when the rich man died, of finding another such to fill his place. There would be fewer advertisements, in the public prints, for clergymen with "private means," for the Divine principle that "the labourer is *worthy* of his hire" * could be honoured. Nor could it any more be said, "The hire of the labourers, which is kept back, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." † The paths which God has opened for us amongst heathen nations would be trod by an increased number of Heralds of the Cross; the spiritual ignorance and darkness of our cities, towns, and hamlets would fade before the increased dissemination of Gospel light; and the cry of "Retrenchment," heard at present from Church societies and committees, would give place to the more scriptural "Go forward." ‡

We have *seen* prosperity quickly follow the adoption of the plan advocated, nor is it to be wondered

* Luke x. 7. † James v. 4. ‡ Exod. xiv. 15.

at, for it is *God's financial method* for doing His work. Look through the Scriptures, read every command and exhortation as to giving, and you will find the *proof* of this method established, in that acting in accordance with it will enable you in some measure to comply with *every command laid down:* in short, you will accomplish what Stebbing said the money spent in war would do, that is, "Build a school-house upon every hill side, and in every valley over the whole habitable earth. Erect an academy in every town, a college in every state, crown every hill with a church consecrated to the promulgation of the Gospel of Peace. Support in the pulpit an able teacher of righteousness; so that on every Sabbath morning the chime on one hill should answer the chime on another round the earth's broad circumference, and the voice of prayer and song of praise would ascend like a universal holocaust to heaven."

Can you devise any other method which promises so much? If not, have you any *reasonable* excuse for not adopting this?

# CHAPTER VII.

"Fly no opinion 'cause 'tis new,
But strictly search, and after careful view
Reject, if false; embrace it if 'tis true."

—LUCRETIUS.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *OBJECTIONS MET.*

> "Fly no opinion 'cause 'tis new,
> But strictly search, and after careful view
> Reject, if false; embrace it if 'tis true."
>
> —LUCRETIUS.

AGAINST God's fraction, as it is herein set forth, there will be not a few objections laid. To anticipate them all would be impossible; we will, however, endeavour to deal with a few.

It may be said with a degree of self-complacency: "Your theory is very good, but I cannot adopt it because I have a family and I feel I must save for my children."

No doubt you should make due provision for your family. The law of providence is taught in Scripture. In its earliest pages we may gather that it is right to make proper precautions for the future. Joseph, by Divine direction, laid by the abundance of seven years against the famine of other seven. But if we save for children at the expense of keeping back from God that which is His, and on which He asserts a special claim, will such saving bring His blessing upon it? Rather the reverse. Can we

conscientiously say to God in the spirit of faith and prayer: we cannot give thee of thine own, for thou hast given to us sons and daughters. Does the Divine Being bestow gifts whereby we may be legitimately prevented from following His teaching and thus honouring Him? The very idea brings its own refutation. Upon these very children you need the blessing of God. Better far have that than have a little more to give them, as the result of keeping back from God. But will you have that "little more?" Is it likely that by dishonouring Him you will have more favourable opportunities for making money? The Divine blessing you feel to be a necessity for your children. Your eye will not always be upon them, your voice will not ever instruct them, nor your hand give guidance. One day you will be gathered home to your fathers, and when leaving them you will feel the blessing of God to be a *tremendous* necessity. If this be so why not seek it now, by endeavouring out of a loving heart to follow the teachings He has laid down in His Word for the guidance of *all* that you are and *have?* "For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes,* nor do they obtain God's favour, "which *maketh* rich and addeth no sorrow," † by, on any pretence, disregarding His will.

We have seen parents carefully hoard money for their children almost to the entire exclusion of the Church, the poor, the heathen, the suffering; true, a *nominal* sum was given, but *only* nominal. The

* Luke vi. 44. † Prov. x. 22.

object of such saving seemed to be, that those children might marry and rise into a higher social sphere, and we have also seen that money melt away like snow before the sunshine, and their marriages bring forth the bitterness of gall and wormwood. Professional men who have an insight into families can tell the same story. The facts of life are incontrovertible. Make due provision! Yes! by all means, but as professing Christians make it in the *right way.*

Imitative your sons and daughters are, and as they apprehend your discharge of duty in offering to God, so their practice may be. You are withholding from God His fraction on the ostensible ground of *their* benefit. What if they, following your example, learn to withhold for themselves? When they arrive at full age will they honour you the more for your unhealthy example? Is it not your duty to them, to the Church, to the poor, to the heathen, to your Almighty Father, to obviate future misapprehension by a free and intelligent discharge of Christian obligation.

Many of the bountiful givers of the present day, some of whom have reached opulence, have been *taught* to give when young out of their portion of weekly money. Selfishness and greed were subdued in childhood, correct habits were formed; and what "mother said and father did" has actuated their hearts when their hair was grey and their steps tottered, and their hands shook as they wrote with feebleness their cheques for God's Church, God's

poor, God's suffering humanity, yes, and trembling voices were heard blessing the mother who bore them, and the God who sustained them. If you would be true to the responsibilities of your family and the teaching of your professed Christianity, abandon the excuse that you cannot offer because you must make provision for your family.

"Our means will not admit of giving this fraction of which you write," say some. Now let us be sure that this is really so before we plead it as a genuine excuse. With our present mode of living we may find it impossible, but is this mode absolutely necessary? and will it admit of no modification? A certain mode of life, it is true, is required from some; for example, ministers. Their position is made for them; they are required to be in dress respectable, in letters versed, and if they are not, their congregations are quick to note it, and express their disapprobation. And there are a few who labour under the same restrictions, but even so, may we not in some way modify our expenditure to meet God's claims on income? Are there not some things which we could do without, it may be with advantage to ourselves? Why should we regard as necessities things which others with an equal income have not? If Providence lessened our income, it might be we would have to do without these things. Can we not then for the honour of God and duty forego them?

Such a course may involve us in sacrifice; but, be it remembered, Christianity was founded on sacrifice,

and Christians are called upon to deny themselves. Self-denial is part of the soul discipline by which God trains and perfects us, and the personal benefits of such training are very great. They more than compensate for what we are at first sight apt to consider loss. Those who have done most for God and man are those who have endured the keenest sacrifices, and humanity itself has encircled their names with a halo of glory.

The Jewish offerings cost the offerers something. The *first*-fruits were presented, the fairest result of toil and care and labour. And in every instance of giving in the New Testatment this principle of sacrifice in offering is evident. Indeed, can giving to God that which has cost us nothing be said to be true giving? Is not the very offering, small though it be, enhanced by the sacrifice it calls forth on our part? We need to learn from the king warrior, who, when abundance was urged upon him wherewith to sacrifice, honourably refused such, and said: "Neither will I offer unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." * If more of this spirit prevailed we would not hear so much of the excuse against which we write.

When Christ said to the sick of the palsy, "Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house," † the ability was given to comply with the command. When He said to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand," ‡ the necessary power was imparted to obey, and so you will find it in *all* Christ's miracles, but not there only, for the same fact appears in

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. † Matt. ix. 6. ‡ Matt. xii. 13.

God's dealings with His people in the Old Testament writings in relation to monetary as well as to other matters. And it is our conviction that when we try lovingly to obey God, the *ability* to perform is given to us. If we think we have not the ability, it is perhaps because we have never really tried to perform. If the sick of the palsy and the maimed man had not honestly *endeavoured* to follow Christ's directions, they would not have been cured, nor can we obtain the reward unless by *obedience* to the command, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over." * We are here reminded of the old woman, a quaint and pious soul, and a regular attendant at her parish church, who, when twitted one day as to what she would do if she was called upon to preach, aptly enough replied: "If the Lord called me to do it, He w'd give me the way." If the Lord calls upon us to offer His fraction He will give us the way.

Or again some one says inwardly—"I offer a little, and I am very content as I am." Friend, if a sheep falls into the mire, it struggles to get out, but if an animal of another species falls in, it makes no effort to free itself. The Master's sheep hear His voice and are not content to remain in the trammels of the world, but follow Him. Saul of Tarsus was content as he persecuted the Church, and thought he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," † but, when he became one of Christ's flock he was no longer so content,

* Luke vi. 38. † Acts xxvi. 9.

but by the help of God's Spirit struggled against former convictions and practices, and rose to duty and sacrifice for Christ. The crucial point for you to consider is whether your content arises from obeying God in the light of His teaching? Any other is false: besides, mere content is a poor gauge. There is a species of content even in sin.

Such a passage as this, "Every man as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity," * may seem to present a difficulty to the minds of some in accepting what is laid down as the scriptural rule, but it should be remembered that such was originally addressed to those whose ideas of liberality had already been formed, and who had manifested that liberality "to their power and beyond their power." If we have established the law of the tenth by the even tenor of Scripture, it cannot be upset by an isolated passage like this. The truth is, this is an appeal for the free-will offerings of the people, just such as we find in the Old Testament, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring Me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart, ye shall take Mine offering." † But such passages do not invalidate the God-claimed portion of a tenth. To these free-will offerings we have already referred,‡ and have shown that they were asked for and given as manifestations of love and gratitude, and were in addition to the recognised tenth. Reasoning merely from such passages in the Old Testament, we might

* 2 Cor. ix. 7. † Exod. xxv. 2. ‡ Page 24.

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and as much beyond it as our enlightened conscience will prompt us to give. But if the effect be to cause all Christians to give only a tenth, what an improvement it would be to the present lamentable condition of things. Even thus circumscribed the Church and the world would be materially benefited.

It may be said: "This offering is not necessary to salvation." We know full well that salvation is alone derivable through the atonement of our blessed Lord, through faith in Him and consequent love to God, and that it is "without money and without price,"* but offering that which involves sacrifice on our part is a manifestation of our love and one of the fruits of our salvation. We are told that it is requisite to love the Lord with "*all* our heart." † If we love thus, we will endeavour to do what we can gather to be His will in His Word, and in so doing use every possible means to give Him His offering. If the love of money or that which money procures reigns in our heart above the love of God, then it is imperatively *necessary* for *us* to give a tenth and more, as a corrective to the covetousness of the soul, indeed money-love and all other loves must be subservient to Christ-love. "He must reign." ‡ And for some it may be *necessary* to give not a tenth, or a fifth, but far more. Hearken to the question of that goodly young man, who came asking what he might do to inherit *eternal life*. Listen to Christ's answer: "Sell," to any limited sum? no, but "all that *thou hast*, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure

* Isa. lv. 1. † Deut. vi. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 25.

in heaven: and come, follow Me." * Christ evidently makes liberality one of the tests of our love, and we shall stand that test but poorly if we are seeking refuge from offering under the specious plea just named.

Or, again, it is said: "I do not feel specially called on to make this offering." The giving of a tenth from very early times, perhaps, as we have intimated, the earliest, was commanded by God. It rested as a moral obligation on men, it has not been done away with, but is found in the New Testament and is yet in force. We have the highest incentives to give more. The early Church was moved by these incentives, and did offer more. Then, this being so, we assume a false position if we rest on feeling, and seek not to learn and act up to our duty. Mere feeling is a blind guide. Our ignorance of God's will, or law, does not excuse us from our responsibilities, any more than ignorance of Queen Victoria's laws excuses a subject from obeying them. We are as professing Christians commanded to "Render unto God the things which be God's," † and it is our *business* to find out what these "things" are, apart from feeling. If we once know, we cannot feel so indifferent in the face of neglected duty, particularly if we are Christians. The polished Athenians, the brave Romans, the Hindoos, the men of Arabia, felt so intently the call of duty towards their deities that they offered more than a tenth, and it is but an indifferent feeling on our part, unworthy of being pleaded

* Luke xviii. 22. † Mark xii. 17.

as an excuse, which will not awaken greater interest and lead to more vigorous action.

We fear that some, whose means are limited, may read these pages and think that because they have little it is not worth while to offer of that little, that whether they give it or withhold it is a matter of no moment either to them or others.

On mere ordinary consideration we attach a certain importance to things small and great. The mind seems to become absorbed in the stupendous effects of great things, so much so, that the results of little things are all but overlooked. This may arise from our limited capacities, or from not using them as fully as we might; but to the Infinite One, who views things in their combinations, relations, and results, it appears differently.

As we see Him reflected in Nature and Revelation, we learn that the *smallest* things are of the *highest* importance, and what we account "little," He may, and does consider great.

"A wave of the hand may seem to us a little thing, yet it is not so insignificant as we imagine; motion does not stop there, but is taken up by the air which is impelled against the walls of the room, &c., thence reflected, and so by direct and reacting waves continually comminuted but *never* destroyed."* The gift of a little to God, as we learn from His Word, has again and again been endowed with the highest importance. The Saviour says: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in

* Groves' "Correlation of Physical Forces."

much." * If God has given us little, we are as responsible for offering that little, as the rich man for offering his large sums. It is for us to consider our *duty* in the matter, and not until we have discharged that does our responsibility end.

Every department of God's cause needs a multiplication of fractions, little as well as great. Dr. M'Lagan, on the occasion of his seventh Anniversary, in his speech to the clergy, acknowledged the place and power of "littles," and that they were not sufficiently calculated upon. He said "they" (the clergy) "trusted too much to the guineas of the rich and too little to the pence of the poor." Perhaps one of the most patent exhibitions of the important effect of "littles" is before us in the large sum raised every year for Hospitals by that very excellent institution known as "Hospital Saturday." If, at present, you cannot see your way to be sufficiently careful, so as to be able to give your proportionate little, it is by no means likely that when you have much you will be *more* careful. This whole subject must be considered with deeper thought by the masses of the people generally. It is a most pernicious and too widespread idea, that the Church and all that pertains to God should be supported by the wealthy. They undoubtedly have their *part* to do, but poorer people have theirs also. God has not given to the rich the *monopoly* of supporting His cause, nor is this an unmerciful order of things for the poor themselves. As Christianity

* Luke xvi. 10.

is for all men, irrespective of their temporal condition, so its claims are equally upon all.

Upon this topic of giving, as a rule, objections arise, either directly or indirectly, from a spirit of covetousness, which is the strong element in our nature that opposes our rendering God His due. It blunts our finest sensibilities, blinds the eye, stops the ear, closes the mouth, turns the edge of the keenest argument forged to assail it, and does all this so imperceptibly, that men often cannot for some time realise that they are under its power. Nor do we fail to find this sin treated of in the Bible, the mirror which shows man his true state, and is so perfect in its representation of human nature that looking into it we find not only the broad lines of human character appear exactly as they are but the lesser delineations also. No flattery is discoverable, but man is set forth *as he is.* The spirit which inspired its writers has not crouched or grovelled to human fancy or pride, and thereby we have one of the proofs of its Divine authorship.

In this true representation of man it is astonishing to find the space given to show the extent of the sin of covetousness. It is not for us in the limits of this work to enter widely upon this fact, but its repeated mention in God's Word shows its wide hold on the human life, and how deeply it enters into the motives and actions of men. Its nature and effects are strongly put before us and condemned; He whose eye "searcheth the heart"*

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

declares it to be in its nature "*idolatry*." "Covetousness which is idolatry" * is the language of the inspired writer; that idolatry which means the worshipping of another God beside Jehovah, a sin which caused the overthrow of men and nations, that is the fearful sin which actuates the heart, and pleads from time to time plausible objections and excuses for withholding from God His own.

The early Church took a much stronger view of this sin than professing Christians do now; they evidently made its manifestation in any of their members a ground for severing them from Christian communion. St Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians says: † "I write unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or *covetous*, or an idolater or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." Nor is the future punishment of this sin uncertain. They who practise it are enumerated with those whose vices are admitted by us: "Nor thieves, nor *covetous*, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." ‡ Many who are professedly Christian would scorn to be guilty of these other offences, but do they scorn equally the sin of covetousness?

The grasp of this sin is undoubtedly on our nation. The Dean of St. Paul's preaching a little time since stated such to be the fact, and classed the magnitude of the sin with that of devastating war. He said: "We have not got rid of war; we

* Col. iii. 5. † Cor. v. 11. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 10; Eph. v. 3

still stand face to face with destroying intemperance and the idolatry of *covetousness*," and this, let us remember, in an age whose splendour, superabundance of wealth, and luxurious indulgence have not been known since the days of the Imperial Cæsars. We are satisfied, that, if any considerable advance is to be made by the Church, the enormity of this sin must be recognised, its power broken by that of the blessed Gospel, and more proportionate, systematic, and Scriptural offering to God made by the entire mass of professing Christians.

But how is the existence of this covetousness of soul to be ascertained by *us?* How may we know whether it influences us or not? Here is the test. Are we willing to give back to God what we believe, from the light of Scripture, to be His special portion of income? If we are unwilling, if we *desire* to keep back any part of it, we are guilty of covetousness, for it consisteth in the *desire* to withhold, as well as in the act.

There is a peculiar fascination in money. In a most insidious fashion it weaves its power into the heart, until, if we are not careful, we will not make any effort to give, but seek every opportunity of holding all we get. There is therefore a special danger to those who are what may fairly be termed *rich.*

Conversing once with a friend, a magistrate and a man of property, in his magnificent home, we happened to say that if we were worth so many thousand pounds we would do certain much needed

works for God's Church. He replied: "No, you would not; when you had the thousands of pounds you would *lose the desire.*" This was the honest confession of a man whose worldly substance was once small, but who, by the "rise in cotton" during the American War, made sums which when invested brought to him wealth. What a sad statement, and that too from a man who was a Christian. What a testimony to the power of money over the soul! Of this we have ample illustrations, one of which occurs to us as recorded by the late Dean of Edinburgh. A rich and noble laird had just picked up a small copper coin in his own avenue, and had been observed by one of the itinerating mendicant class, who, feeling that he needed the coin more, exclaimed: "O, gie't to me, my lord;" to which the quiet answer was, "Na, na; fin' a fardin for yersell, puir body."

This inordinate passion Christ recognised. He was Lord of all. He knew the component parts and the effects of every element in our nature, and He spoke of "the *deceitfulness* of riches." * It was this knowledge which doubtless led Him to utter those solemn words: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." † By His inspired Apostle He gives a distinct commission to the rich: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, READY to

* Matt. xiii. 22. † Mark x. 23.

distribute, willing to communicate."* Mark! We do not hold that it is a sin to be rich, nor does the Word of God anywhere teach this. Far be it from us to believe or advocate the Socialistic doctrine that "It is a crime to have property," or to coincide with the view expressed by many Christian advocates, that "It is a wicked thing to die rich," but we do maintain, and that from the light of Scripture, that it is absolutely *essential* for the rich, in view of the *insidious* character of their possessions, to acknowledge God's claim on these possessions, to systematically set apart what they believe, after Scriptural investigation, to be God's fraction or portion of such riches, and with a bountiful and loving spirit *seek* to find legitimate channels for offering it. This subject to them is of special importance.

Let the rich man have his equipage, palace, retinue, and the becoming attendants to his position, but whilst he sees he has these things, let him also see that he "renders unto God the things that be God's."† To die blinded by the deceitfulness of money is a *fearful death*, yet how few think of it!

Some there are who do not offer to God during life all they know they should, because they like to "die rich" and leave legacies. They have a pride in anticipating that it will be said of them: "They died worth so many thousand pounds" but by no passage of the Word of God can this be coun-

* 1 Tim. vi. 17. † Mark xii. 17.

tenanced. The record of all the good and holy is of what they DID as opportunity presented itself, or as they could *find* opportunity. Dorcas is said to have "been full of good works and alms which she DID." * "*Now* is the accepted time." † Moreover, what can be done now is *needed*, what God needs is of primary importance. The Scriptural principle is giving to God *as* God gives to us. The little given now may bear greater and more timely results than the much given in the future, and may not the deceitfulness of riches or the importunity of friends overcome us at the last? The principle is not only unscriptural but dangerous. The present *benefit* to you of present offering, under the Providence of God, may be great. What are you *losing*?

Let every one who reads this work be mindful that they have an influence which increases with their position in life, and as they are using their Lord's fraction, so they are now influencing others. Yes, and after death our influence will live, live to be a blessing and to stimulate others to *honour* God; or, otherwise, to impoverish God's cause, and lessen the force of His claim on others. The thoughts we instil, the false views we teach, the perverted character we help to form will all live; and we are *responsible* for such influence; we have no power to destroy our responsibility.

Our opportunity for acting as a "good and faithful servant" ‡ may soon cease, and what we have done will influence our future happiness. God will

* Acts ix. † 2 Cor. vi. 2. ‡ Matt. xxv. 21.

render to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his works.* The Lord, with whose property we are intrusted, says: "My reward is with Me, to give to every man *as* his work shall be." † He will reckon with His servants. If you have never thought about God and money in close connection, and, as a consequence, have never given Him His fraction in the past, what restitution will you make? ‡ "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?" §

You have read the arguments we have advanced. Is there any force in them? If so, will that force be an *active* principle in your life?

"Oh let me give
Out of the gifts Thou freely givest;
Oh let me live
With life abundantly because Thou livest;
Oh make me shine
In darkest places, for Thy light is mine;
Oh let me be
A faithful witness for Thy truth and Thee."
—FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

* Prov. xxiv. 12; Matt. xvi. 27; 2 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Cor. xi. 15; Rev. xiv. 13; Rev. xx. 12.

† Rev. xxii. 12.

‡ Note, on the subject of Restitution read Exod. xxii. 3, 5, 6, 12; Job xx. 18; Luke xix. 8.

§ Luke xvi. 5.

# KINGLY COUNSEL.

*Where evidence relating to "The King's Coin" may be found.*

**New Testament.**

Matt. vi. 1–4, 19–21.
,, vii. 12–20.
,, x. 8, 42.
,, xiii. 22.
,, xxi. 18, 19.
,, xxiii. 23.
,, xxv. 14–46.
,, xxvi. 6–13.
Mark x. 21–23.
,, xii. 31–44.
,, xvi. 15.
Luke vi. 38.
,, x. 29–37.
,, xi. 42.
,, xii. 15–48.
,, xiii. 6–9.
,, xvi. 1–31.
,, xviii. 28–30.
,, xix. 8–13.
Acts ii. 44, 45.
,, iv. 31–37.
,, v. 1–11.
,, ix. 36–42.
,, x. 1–31.
,, xx. 35.

**Old Testament.**

Gen. xiv. 20.
,, xviii. 22.
Exod. xxii. 3–12.
,, xxiii. 15.
,, xxxv. 4–21.
,, xxxvi. 4–7.
Lev. xxvii. 30–33.
Num. vii.
,, xviii. 21, 24.
Deut. xii. 18.
,, xiv. 22, 29.
,, xv. 7–11.
,, xvi. 10–17
,, xxvi. 12–16.
2 Sam. xxiv. 24.
1 Kings xvii. 8–16.
2 ,, iv. 8–10.
1 Chron. xvi. 29.
,, xxix. 9–16.
2 ,, x. 37.
,, xii. 44.
,, xiii. 5.
,, xxxi. 5–12.
Neh. x. 32–39.
Job xx. 18.

NEW TESTAMENT.

Rom. xii. 13.
,, xv. 27.
1 Cor. iv. 7.
,, ix. 11–14.
,, xiii. 3.
2 Cor. viii. and ix.
Gal. vi. 2–10.
Eph. iv. 28.
Phil. iv. 16–19.
1 Tim. vi. 9–19.
Heb. viii. 1–10.
,, xiii. 3–16.
James ii. 12–17.
,, v. 1–16.
1 John iii. 17, 18.
Rev. v. 12.
,, xiv. 13.
,, xx. 12.
,, xxii. 12.

OLD TESTAMENT.

Ps. xli. 1.
Prov. iii. 9–28.
,, xi. 24, 25.
,, xiii. 7.
,, xiv. 21–31.
,, xix. 17.
,, xxi. 13–26.
,, xxii. 9.
,, xxiv. 11, 12.
Prov. xxix. 7.
,, xxxviii. 8–27.
Eccles. v. 13.
Isa. lviii. 6–11.
Hagg. i. 5–11.
,, ii. 8.
Mal. iii. 8–12.

# CONSPECTUS.

CHAPTER I.—GOD'S FRACTION.

Truth—value of—obscured—reasons—God's claim upon income not so fully declared as it might be—probable reasons—prejudicial consequences—what income is—God the source of it—proofs—His claim on it—shown in the fact that He lends but does not alienate from Himself—this seen by references to Eden, &c.—by a definite portion of income being *required* by Him at later periods—by express Divine statements—by the conduct of eminent Scripture characters—man agent or steward—this truth enforced—as such we should apportion God's property as He directs—the right to this apportionment God has ever asserted—evidence—reasonableness—express directions laid down by Him as to giving—objects set before us to support—all income not our own—a certain part may in a special sense be termed "The King's Coin," and be particularly regarded as God's Fraction—spirit of greed rebuked.

CHAPTER II.—WHAT FRACTION?

Methods of teaching—utility of—taking consensus of scriptural evidence, God's special claim—precedents

in Scripture—evidence in support—Macedonian Churches — Church at Jerusalem — Zacchaeus — widow — Jewish Dispensation, offerings presented by command—Levitical tenth—festal and sacrificial tenth — trespass offerings — exhortative or free-will offerings—Jews gave more than a fifth—objection met—taxation equal to ours—tenth required from earlier period—moral law in force before Sinaic codification — tenth a moral obligation and probably obligatory also before—same probability shown from reference to Sabbath—conclusion.

CHAPTER III.—WHAT FRACTION?

Foregoing argument advanced by reference to Patriarchal Dispensation—Job—Abraham and Melchizedek—reference in Hebrews—vow of Jacob—having reviewed three Dispensations find no instance that teaches us to give less than a tenth—should give in proportion—reasonable, such taught in New Testament instances—proportion involves a rule—rule found in Scripture, a tenth—objection to the peculiarity of the Jewish Dispensation met—objection Patriarchs did not give by command—refuted—probability of tenth given under the Adamic Dispensation—references to early heathen offerings—Cain's offering—no evidence that command to give a tenth abolished—*moral* duties of Jewish Dispensation binding on us, offering a tenth moral duty, *ergo* binding now—Apostles expressed the mind of Christ—St. Paul's statement of the support of the Christian ministry, founded on support of Jewish—he spoke as inspired—considering *har-*

*mony* and unity of Bible, and that "whatsoever things written aforetime . . . for our instruction," and that we should be *imitators* of those who inherit the promises—a tenth of income at least belongs to God.

CHAPTER IV.—ITS VARIABLENESS.

Variableness of the measure of duty—in every New Testament instance more than a tenth given—instances examined—likely these cases *singled* out for our instruction—our privileges—knowledge—mission greater than the Jews, *ergo* our offerings should be greater—wealthy should not stop at a tenth—necessities of the times—paths opened into heathen countries—condition of labouring classes—population of large cities—missionary societies crippled by lack of money—statements by bishops——condition of clergy—clerical charities—increased fidelity by Christians necessary in the discharge of duty—inconsistency between Christian profession and practice—evil effect on others—giving too much—in deciding amount of offering should consider—mercies received from God—the amount we retain—the power of the Cross—conclusion.

CHAPTER V.—WHEN TO OFFER IT.

During Divine Worship on the Lord's Day—love primary characteristic of true worship—it is not satisfied with mere interchange of sentiments and feelings—by substantial forms ratifies such expres-

sions—we should offer then not only praise and prayer in worship but some of our substance—worship and offering associated from earliest times—instances—Rabbins—Christ at the Treasury—interest therein—import—if offering be an essential part of our worship may expect to find some apostolic direction for furtherance of such—found in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, "First day of the week" &c.—this the day of worship—here then opportunity provided for offering of what is put in store—suitability of the time—presence of God—petition—aids to faith—humility—associations of the day—all help us to present true offering—Church should *provide* for such—our *advantage* in being allowed to offer—should arrange to do so—objection met—all included—poor—free seats—good effect of offering in public worship—privilege thereof—honour—facts for church-goers—royal functions—offer remainder of our proportionate store through various suitable channels according to the nearness and necessity of claims—by quietest methods—when specially needed—discrimination—in such keep Christ before us.

CHAPTER VI.—ITS ADVANTAGES.

To true offerers themselves as recorded in Scripture—daily life—compensatory laws—God not unmindful—promises—increase of concern and interest in Church and godly institutions—power to offer increased—pleasure also—may lead to the apprehension of greater truths—effect on thrift—instance—destroy mere competitive giving—teach poor to give as well

as to receive—spirit of true independence awakened —show true position of "littles"—benefit to Church —greater interest awakened in her well-being—kind of interest most needed now—increased revenue and power for good—effect on special offertories—questionable means—good intentions—strengthen hands of clergy—churches and rich parsons—"private means"—retrenchment—assist poor districts, &c.—help us to comply with God's commands as to offering —Stebbing on war.

CHAPTER VII.—OBJECTIONS MET.

A number of objections adduced by some persons from Scripture and daily life considered and answered —covetousness, the enormity of the sin—its insidiousness—how regarded by the early Church—present hold on Christians—Dean of St. Paul's quoted—how to find out where covetousness is—we are responsible for our influence—Socialism—rich men —a fearful death—a false ambition—God's need—personal loss—future aspects—what force in the whole argument—what effect on reader?

THE END.

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